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check out the rest of Lil' Angel Baby's POW on page 5

EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 12.05

Here's a rant to jump start this week's fabulous Beat issue that you have in your hands. We are sure by now you have flipped through this current issue and either found the piece you wrote for us several weeks back, or have found the pieces from your homies and what-not. We do hope you take the time to not only read your friends' pieces, but to especially read the POW (Pieces Of the Week) and CoPOWs, Standouts and of course the backbone of every publication, The BWO (Beat WithOut). These fine writers featured in these respected sections have the skills to teach -and we know this will continue each and every issue too!

Most of these writers come from the heart. Most of these writers either have strong writing skills or have simply gained the confidence to write and honestly tell their story over time with or without The Beat.

Regardless, we go into many of these units each week and despite a number of you, truly embracing the writing workshops, there is always a handful of wannabe tough guys who think our venue is all about gossiping, talking loud, disrespecting and just acting the ass -yeah the ass.

So where is this editorial note going? Well, maybe, just maybe, you can admit to yourself that you are one of those youngsters who reluctantly comes through and disturbs the class. A couple things now to consider; one, maybe you should simply stay back the next time we come to your unit to do our program? Or, come with a new attitude! Leave the bullshhh at the door. Step up and be your own man/woman. Take the initial steps in really writing a meaningful piece! If you can't write, there is no shame, ask for help!

In truth, we hate — should we spell this out for you, ok, h-a-t-e — hate, when the session is disrespected. We take this work very serious. We take a huge chunk of time out of our lives to come down/up to the hall each week. Been doing this weekly for well over a decade now, twelve years total! We hate to feel like a substitute teacher that has no control.

We have this little forty-five minute to an hour session with you and we bounce. We ask for that hour if you could simply come through with all good intentions in participating in a respectful way. Leave the N word at the door. Leave the repping at the door. Leave the racism at the door. Leave the machismo (soap opera) attitude at the door. Bottom-line leave the shhh! Simple. Period.

We are sure this will not be the last time we have to say this, but hell, we too, need to get things off our chest, and you better believe we empathize with you all who are confined, incarcerated, fighting for freedom, or for many, your lives.

A number of years ago, we worked with a young man in the max unit whose name was Shawn Rogers. Shawn wrote in The Beat Within every week for well over two years. He was housed in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall. Eventually Shawn, who wrote under the name Baby A, was tried as an adult (Proposition 21) and was sentenced to over twenty years in prison. Shawn was one bad dude, yet he was quiet and respectful to all. He set the tone in not only the class every week, but on the unit (so we were told by staff) too by just being his quiet no nonsense self, and the youngsters in his unit, no matter what they claimed, followed his lead. During his two plus years, Shawn wrote what seemed like hundreds of pieces which reinforced his leadership and who he was as a writer, teacher, student, while struggling to accept his fate, as a teenager/young man who allowed the streets and gang life to swallow him whole.

We still hear from Shawn from time to time, up in Pelican Bay State Prison the last time he wrote, but like a number of you who are here today (you know who you are) he has made a major impact on our (the readers) lives and will never be forgotten by the readers and us facilitators. It's our hope that we will be remembering you in years to come because of the legacy you leave on these pages.

We would like to share a couple of Shawn's (Baby As) pieces in this note. The two we selected are from issue 5.27 and issue 6.29 ...

Memories (5.27)

I remember playing with Hot Wheels and GI Joes Atari played out as soon as I started playing with Nintendo

I remember playing cartoon, and strip tag with my brothers and cousins

I remember posting up on the eastside, stressed out because we had no Kool-aid, so we used to buy those straws from the ice cream truck, that had some flavor powder inside

I remember back when I used to sport LA Gears, British Knights, and Cross Colour clothing
Now it's K-Swiss, Chuck Taylors, and khaki suits
What about back in the 6th grade when I took my first hit of a cigarette, which was a Marlboro
Now I smoke Black-and-Milds, Beedies, and Newport

I remember being confused about the difference between a man and a boy
Wasn't too long ago, that I stole my first car,

which happened to be a teacher's car from my school, four years ago to be exact, but damn, it seems like yesterday
What about when I was fourteen, experiencing sex for the first time

I started to laugh when I reminisced on all the times I ran away from home, broke with no money, sleeping in vehicles, parks, and schools

Hell, I remember the times when I was just broke period, too lazy to get a 9 to 5 or a part-time job
I remember going to my first funeral, staring at my brother in his coffin, crying and contemplating as to why things happened like this

What about when I was eleven, beginning my uncontrollable liquor habit

Can't forget when I was fourteen, smoking weed for the first time which became an even worse habit

I remember when I dropped out of high school during my junior year with somewhere around 50 credits

Not too long after that I got initiated into my set

I remember the first time I came to Juvenile Hall, got released the next day
Four months later I returned for a two week stay, telling the counselors 'I'm never coming back'

A month and a half later, I returned, stayed for a month waiting to get shipped off to the Ranch for a 90 day program

About 60 days into the program, I got popped with attempted murder charges

I remember when my attorney told me that I could end up doing 25 to Life for this drama
Maybe one day when I'm released, I'll come across this poem, and reminisce on all the time I wasted trying to be the hardest gangster ever known

-Baby A

To My Unborn Child (6.29)

I'm writing you a letter

Since there's a chance I might not get to meet you

Witness your birth into this earth

One of the first to greet you

Hearing your first but far from last cries

Officially traumatized

Before you even get a chance to see

Outside of this hospital

Prepare yourself because it's far from humble

Matter of fact it's a jungle

The name of the game is hustle

And I don't mean hustle by slanging dope

I mean by moving fast

But if you do choose to sell dope

Make sure you watch your ass

And that brings us to the next topic

Of those who you call friends

Before you use that word

Make sure you know what a true friend is

A lot of people will be friendly

When your money is right

But as soon as you go broke

Watch how quick they disappear

Up out of your life

Yeah it sounds inconceivable but believe me it's true

Hell, not too long ago I was just as dumbfounded

As you

I had to learn the hard way

By riding hard for a gang

Gave out my love too loosely

Now I'm the one stuck with pain

Been locked down in this institution for 17 months

And I realize that most of the people

Who called themselves homies was just a front

The set I was banging was pretty deep

But I only felt somewhat close to about eight

And would you believe out of all of them

Only one writes me

Plus I heard when I get released

My so called homies are going to want to fight me

Obviously my departure wasn't taken lightly

Suppose to be my homies

Truth is my only true friend is my misery

The only one who doesn't leave me

When I'm depressed looking and feeling miserably

Now I'm not saying that everyone you encounter is devious

But always keep your third eye open

Don't underestimate the power of mischievousness

Friends come and go just like money and dope

But that doesn't mean you have to be antisocial

You're guaranteed to be acquainted with fallacious individuals

Fallacy is global, child my mom once told me

That a person will only have one or two

Friends in their life, when I decide to inquire her statement

I finally realized that my moma was right

But like I said I had to learn the hard way

I'm hard headed so that's okay

I don't regret anything I had to learn from my mistakes

Are you taking heed to this knowledge I'm giving you

If so then that's great but if not

At least you can't say I didn't try to save
You from these snakes
In a few years or so you will be able to relate
Since you'll be born with my genes
With yourself you will converse
Society will tell you that it's wrong
Then try to send you to a mental institution
But figuring out who really needs help
Will probably put you in a state of confusion
Now doesn't that seem aberrant
How the next person can criticize your personal principals

Makes criticizing them not too difficult
Child believe me, study everything in life like rituals

Especially people then you'll realize the line between

Plebeians and the aristocrats is invisible

The only difference is cash

But without that we all breath the same air

And pump hemoglobin throughout our veins

So no matter what people tell you

Just believe that we're all the same

Now you will probably be tempted to start bargin'

I'm not going to preach on that

Just look at my situation, facing a couple of decades

Of unwanted vacation

This is the best demonstration I could give you

So I'm hoping you take it

But if you choose to bang

Then I'll pray that you make it

To whatever destination you was traveling to

I'm sure I'm familiar with it, I probably been there too

Because being on that type of road

There's only two places to go

The local cemetery or death row

So have prudence

Don't become disillusioned from these illusions

Everybody gets fooled at least once in their lifetime

That's natural, so don't ever believe that

You're incompatible

Child, the incunabula will attack you like dracula

But after a while you shall become

Immune to the pain

Self restraint is essential in this game

The point I'm trying to get across

Is for you to be the one who leads your life

But whatever it is you do make sure that you

Honestly believe that it's right

Before I let you go make sure you prepare

Yourself because this life is an everlasting test

And by the way if we never get to meet

I hope you know that I'm wishing you the best

Much love

-Baby A

There are so many great in your face Baby

A pieces. (If you want them, holler at your Beat

facilitator and we'll share more!)

Ok, for the topics at hand, our first topic,

"Looking Back At Past Experience" - Has

something ever happened to you that made you

think it was "all bad" and that everything was

going wrong — only to change that opinion later

on? Have you ever been in a situation where it

seemed that the world was against you, but as

time passed and you gained maturity, you looked

back at what happened and you realized that it

wasn't as bad as you thought? In fact, have you

re-evaluated any situation you thought was "only

bad" and decided that, after all, it was probably

for the good? Give us the details.

The second topic, "What Habit Do You Want

— Or Need — To Break?" -

All of us have (or have had) habits that aren't

really good for us, from smoking cigarettes, to

biting your nails, to disrespecting your parents,

to hanging on the block. What is the one habit

— if any — that you would like to change? How

has that habit hurt you in the past? How are you

working on eliminating this habit from your day-

to-day life?

Thid topic, "Loneliness" - No one is a

stranger to loneliness. Sometimes, we can even

feel lonely in a crowded room. People strive to

feel less lonely in many ways. What do you do

when you feel lonely? Tell us about the positive

things you do (hanging out with good friends

and family, reading a good book, taking a walk,

etc.), as well as the negative things you do

(maintaining destructive relationships, taking

drugs, gang-banging) that have helped you avoid

feeling lonely.

Last topic, "What Is Your Happy Food?" -

What is the only food that, no matter what, will

always make you happy? Is it chocolate? McD's? A

particular dinner? Why do you think it makes you

happy?

This week's POW winners are Manny Bo,

Brianda, Lil' Angel Baby, Big Vic (writes two), and

Jacob (writes two) all from the 150 Crew. From

SF/YGC we have Lil' Lazy, Lg, and Anouny Mouse.

From Marin, we have Baby G, and last but not

least Pinky from Walden House.

All right, this one goes out to the winners,

the serious ones who are not looking to impress

anyone other than the ones who want better for

them and truly care for them.

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Behind A Shadow

what i see
vanishes at sight
memories
haunt me at night
clouded thoughts
don't stop
beaten by the game
with power to obtain
draining
from the bottom
rising to the top
rain falls
on my skin
then creeps within
my blood
quicker and quicker
the blood gets thicker
decayed away
in thin air
to the endless sky
i stare
a gaze of reflection
misled
the wrong direction
win or lose
in the end we choose
precision with confusion
seems an illusion
amused
by the night's fire lights gleaming
bright amongst
the sky's lights

a victorious mystery
going down in history
missing ends
scrambled pieces
the interest increases
it all lies scattered in pieces
restless
for the next night
visions
now outta sight
the lesser light becomes
so bright
my mind is crumbled
confused
in a daze
careless cold hearts
a little
is all you need
to take you so
high you could die
mental loss of control
feelings go numb
contusions are dumb
impairing ability to
do right
decision-making
leads to life-taking
no rest
no sleep
inside it hides
oh so
weak
first place in a race

in the end a
disgrace

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Terrific poem about where one goes following deceitful visions of rising-to-the-top decisions that lead to the death and destruction of all you'd hold sacred if your naked lust for power hadn't reduced your conscience to cowardly acts of vicious ambition to employ a calculus of demonic detachment from the tragic consequences of your actions. Now is the time of contrition, despondent admission of your erroneous acts on the road to getting caught slippin' — but that's not the sin, for redemption requires a truth that pierces deeper within your heart and soul, reaching with compassionate truth's claim on your own thoughts that spun you out of control. Mercy, pity, peace and love — forgiveness begins with that admission of what you did. For only then can the powerful fiction that drove you to sin against humanity, in the ego's call for more power to feed its vanity, be revealed as the delusional insanity of a lie burrowed deep inside the darkness you covered with a face and a name, your own, which now bears the shame as you feel the pain. Yet there is something real now to be gained at last, for shattered with the false vision of demonic pride is your false ego's inhuman mask you wore inside which can no longer hide your true self from the light of day. Through the pain of remorse, compassion fashions a redemptive course, no longer seeking to trade the face of the victim for the face of the victimizer, you begin to rise higher not into the delirium of your misguided former mission but into making a clear decision to honor mercy, pity, peace and love, as step by step you slowly rise above the adamantine heavens of hell through this dark night of the soul to be reborn here on earth ready to prove the worth of your true self, buried all this time like a forgotten seed in the core of your soul, now a seedling sprout slowly climbing out of darkness into light, growing whole by doing right. Forgive yourself but make amends, for the story of redemption never ends.

Head Up High

I keep my head up high
Never let my loved ones see me cry
Never to the ground,
But up to the sky,
But the tears fall
Ain't no way I'll lie
Thinkin' 'bout my past
All the stuff I did
See the cops and I ran and I hid
Never got caught, thought I was slick
Lost my temper, went back to old Vick
Walkin' down the Hall, cuffs on my hands
Head still up,
So you can look in the eyes of a man
Always got to keep my chin up
A bad female walk by and I glance at her butt
Now my head's back up to say, "What's up?"
Never stare at the ground too long
Thinkin' 'bout me bein' down there feels so wrong,
So I'll wait till then to rest my head
I'll have a lot of time when I'm dead.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Bravo! We can tell that you have a lot of pride. However, sometimes that same pride can backfire on us. Nevertheless, this is a trait that is more of a positive than a negative. We hope that this experience has opened your eyes to the fact that regardless of how slick you think you might be; your luck is going to eventually run out. The proof is there to back up what we're telling you. Al Capone, Pablo Escobar, Felix Mitchell, etc., the list goes on and on. Some of these guys ran some very sophisticated rings of crime, but even they met their fate. Doing dirt might benefit you in the short term, but life is not a sprint; it is a marathon, and in the long run, doing things legit and honest pays off even more.

The Most Dreaded Funeral Of All

On my way to a funeral house. Can't feel my body. It seems like I'm floatin', no air in my lungs. Can't feel my heart beat. No one seem to acknowledge my presence. Family and homies cryin'.

At a far corner I can make out the casket. I don't got any idea who's in it. I can no longer control myself and wanna shed a tear. It's killin' me to see my mom cryin' out of control. Now I'm cryin' too, but nothing's comin' out my eyes. I wanna comfort my mom, but she's in so much pain that she can't even hear me or know that I'm there. One family member after another are takin' a glance inside the casket. So are my homies.

I wanna go too, but it looks like it's somebody very loved, and I don't wanna see him or her layin' down in there. After a couple of hours I make up my mind, and I'm on the line to go see the deceased. The line movin'. Soon I'll be standin' before the casket. Now there's only one more person in front of me but I'm still not lookin' at it. I rather see it when my turn comes.

Now it's my turn. I'm walkin' up. I'm right in front of it. I look down and... God! This can't be true! This can't be happenin'! Now everything makes sense. Can't feel my body, heartbeat, no oxygen, no one acknowledgin' me. I'm lookin' at a peaceful me restin' eternally. Now everything goes blank.

-Lil' Lazy U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Even though we knew what was coming (because we've read these scary dreams before), you still managed to capture the true essence of what you're risking in the game, and you kept us with you at every step of the way. Your description of your mother crying so uncontrollably that she couldn't hear or see you is so powerful, that we can't understand why it isn't enough to make you want to change what you are doing to the person who brought you into the world, the person who loves you unconditionally, the person you have yet to pay back by giving up the life that leads to the grave far, far too soon. Anyone who can write a description like this does not need us to tell him what this means, or what your responsibility is. The "somebody" in the coffin may be "very loved," as you write, but is he very loved by himself? If so, then he will do what it takes to get back into the loving arms of his mother where he belongs, and cause her no more pain. This is a great piece of writing, Lil' Lazy. It made us cry. But we will cry even harder if it is only words, without power to change the writer...

A Book Called Reality

When you want to see the out, you think to yourself, "I'm in four walls with a door that is locked on the outside." And as you think to yourself, like, "How did I get here?" You don't know. And then, when it all comes to you, you think, "Someone told on me." No, they didn't.

You alone did it to yourself. So as you sit here in this room with no way out, as you live in this room, you can't say nothing but, "It is reality." You get up each day with someone telling you to fold your things, someone feeding you cold food each day. And as you look out of the window, you think to yourself, "Who do I hang with? Who do I?" So what I say is: "Drink, smoke, fight." Say it to those who think that is reality, that is life.

As time goes by, you think to yourself, "Why did I bring myself here? What for?" As I look around, I see nothing but four walls and a window. As I look out the window, I see the outside. As I kick the window and I punch it many times, it won't break. As it all falls to you — as you're yelling, balling, it won't help you or your situation. It is nothing but reality.

The more you think about the good rather than the bad, the more you steady getting stronger and stronger. And you build that good side as you think each day and night, thinking about your friend's family, and you bad one in the schoolroom, the staff and the way they talk to you, the stuff they use against you — that kind of stuff is reality, as real as anything you see in life, things that go on and on each day of your life.

As you grow older, you form yourself. At the various ages that you turn, you can say so much and do so much, but it is just reality. And so are the things that we all do. Say it comes back to us, sometime in our lives, as we all picture it, feel, here. And talk at some point is just life as it continues. We will all go through it as a kid, child, parent; we all face things we don't want to face. It is called change of life.

As the years go by, you think to yourself, "Why did I do the things I did and what for?" So I think to myself and realize that I have to be punished for my actions. And I know the next time to not be around those who get me in trouble. As I look at it, it is reality. It's life, the world we live in. As we ask God to forgive us, there is nothing else we can do, and what you see is what you get.

In life, it's not a game. It is not something to play with, like guns or other things — so you see people get killed each day, each night, and you think to yourself, "That could've been me!" or "... my mom!" or "... my brothers and sisters!" But each day is a deadline, and people see that the world is coming to an end. But it is reality.

And I think to myself each day and night that life gets wars, and you look at it.

I hope my life gets easier, so I don't have to struggle in life. And as days go by, you think to yourself and say to yourself, "I can change reality, and everybody can be happy." As the years go by slowly, surely and carefully, you and your family, and friends, schools, jobs — you change. Reality goes on each day of your life, as you ask God to forgive you for what you did in life. And you may know that all your dreams come true in reality that you dream. Sometimes you think that they don't come true, but if you think about it, they will.

As life goes by and your mind is just going and going, and the only thing we can do is stop what you do in life as a young person in your life. So as you go on with your life as a young person or as a young parent, a reality is that you

can do so much, boy or girl — and you are your reality!

So do not let no one tell you nothing wrong for your success in society. You think that no one can tell you right is better than to go jump off a cliff or kill yourself. But time goes by fast, and by the time you get to twenty, or in your thirties, you are going to say, "I wish I was a kid again." But you know you don't, because you were going back to jail so many times when you were young — that's reality.

And you need help with yourself, just as my brother is doing the things he should not be doing, and he can't get his self out of it. His name is David, and he is fifteen years old, and I grew up with him since we were both babies — and he walks around with guns each day! And I don't want him killed!

And I just want him to stop what he is doing. And I know that is reality, but I want the best for him as he realizes he has only one chance to live on this earth. But by the time he gets to be my age, I don't want him to do what I did — go to jail till he is twenty-five! He has a lot to learn and live, and I want the best for him as I see him in life. For life is something you live each day and each night, and as we change and get older, we have to face things. THE END.

-Lil' Angel Baby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have definitely written a book on reality, the reality of the life you live, and your brother lives, and nearly all the readers of The Beat live. And it can seem so unreal, when you're out there in the street, getting high and playing a game that is not a game in the end but reality — with terrible endings like death or years in jail if you don't stop "playing" — it because you realize that life is not something to be played with anymore than a gun is. And it seems so unreal to be locked in that room with no doorknob on the inside, just a cube with the cut-out of a door with a window in it and a window in the wall and no way out until someone lets you out, and yet, when you find you can neither punch nor kick your way out, you face the fact that it's real. Major props to you for accepting the hard truth of the role you played in putting yourself here. But it's not too late to change for the better, and your writing will change others for the better if they have ears to hear and eyes to see the truth you place before eyes to see and their ears to hear. You said you wrote a book, and you did, and it is amazing to witness your thoughts as you face the difficult fact of reality and think your way through accepting your responsibility all the way to seeing that reality is what you make it. To change the world change yourself, and don't sit silent — testify, as you do here, with The Beat as a witness, that someone can hear the truth and be changed by it, changed enough to change his/her life. We'll pray for your brother. Give us his address and we'll mail him this Beat with your piece. But if part of asking for forgiveness from God is making amends, that you are doing, young friend. Major props! Much love and respect. You will be blessed for your blessing.

Respect Your Parents

The habit that I need to break is disrespecting my parents. My mom is the world to me she gives me whatever I want whenever I want she lets me do whatever I want whenever I want. She lets me go out with my friends get home late or sleep over, and all I do is disrespect her and I don't want to do that anymore. She tells me I can do whatever I want as long as I respect her and check in. I never do and I feel bad. I love her to death. She's every thing I have in the world.

Now after I get out of juvenile hall I'm going to give her all the respect and trust a mother needs. When she came down and visited me she broke out in tears telling me that she loves me and prays for me to get out as soon as possible. I want to change. This has been a dramatic experience and gave me time to think on how I treat my mom and I cry every night thinking of that. I wish I could let her know how much I love her and how much I need her right now. But when I'm out of juvenile hall I'm going to treat my mom with respect, trust, and love, Because I love her more than I show it and more than she knows.

-Brianda, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well, the first thing you can do is give her this piece to read. I'm sure she will feel your love when she reads it. The second is to know that good parents who love and support you, will forgive you past actions and love you no matter what. But you can drive parents over the edge if you continue disrespecting them and acting selfishly. We hope that you stick to your promises and don't return to your old ways when you get out.

Looking Back at The Past experience

A past experience I had was when I came back to the halls. I thought everything was all bad. My mind was somewhere else for real. I felt like everything was going wrong. But I look at it like this, make the best out of a bad situation.

It's all right to pray, but don't pray to God and don't really mean what you're saying. You have to really be sincere about what you saying. Follow though on what you're praying for. God got a lot in store for us in life if we do right. The reason why I say this is because I believe in God.

It also be times when I think the world is against me because it seems like ain't nobody showing me the love I need. I can't say like that because my grandmother shows me a lot of love. But that's just the way I be feeling at times.

Life ain't easy. It's going to be a lot of obstacles in your way when you're trying to do right. Now that I look back and look at my situation, it really ain't all that bad. I'm still living for the year '07. It's a lot of killings going around out there. It's already five deaths in San Francisco almost for every day of this month.

To tell the truth I'm happy to be locked up in a good way because now I got time to really think about what I want to do in life. I am really trying to survive and have a family of my own and take care if my family. But before I do that I have to get myself together. I always soak up game from older people that been through a lot, like a few of my YGC counselors and a few Beat Within workers. It ain't nothing wrong with listening.

Now that I know where I'm going, I'm about to work on getting my shhh together. Because now the ranch is a one-year program, and its hella boring. So I'm just going to do what I have to do because if you look at it, a year, that's just a little vacation. I need to get away for a long minute and get my school on so I can graduate. I also been thinking about going to college. I been hearing from a lot of people that college is what's up. That's why I been going to the Omega meetings soaking up a lot of good information from Jack and others of the Omega program. Hopefully when I touch back down I can get a good job and finish my probation and move on with my life. It's going to be hard, but it's worth it down beat.

-Lg U4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Some people waste a lot of time in here, wishing to get out but thinking only of the next smoke, the next drink, the next girl, the next lick, etc. A few, however, use their time to think about their futures in a way that will pay huge dividends in the long run, You are one of those people. You know what you want out of life, and it's worth more than Fort Knox gold — a family of your own. Even better, you've been thinking about what you need to do to get your life back on track, and you are beginning to see that the track begins in school, runs through graduation and into college, continues through all that you will learn for the first time, which will open new doors to travel through and beyond. You should be very proud of yourself, LG, because you have looked around and decided that a lot of what you hear from peers and even adults is BS, and that your life is more important than all the BS put together. Yes, it will be hard, but not as hard as what you face if you fail to do it. Can you succeed? We have no doubt! Will you succeed? You tell us...

RIP, Baby Chulo

RIP, Baby Chulo aka Charles/Charlie.

Baby Chulo's my big brother. He was murdered September 29th, 2006.

I haven't seen him in hella time, 'cause he moved to LA when I was about six, but I still talked wit' him on the phone and on MySpace.

He called me the night he died at 1:30 am. He said, "I love you, Baby Sis. I miss you. Always keep me in your heart, 'cause even though I'm gone in person, I'll always be with you in spirit."

I said, "What? What's going on?"

He hung up. I found out the next day that he had been shot when he was kickin' it on the streets wit' his ninjas and was throwin' up his color, so some rivals did a drive-by and shot him.

The hospital called me a half-hour after he got shot, because the surgeon said there was nothing they could do. He was internally bleeding and they couldn't fix it. He was going to die either way, so they gave him a shot that would kill him, so he wouldn't have to suffer.

I miss him hella much. It still hurts and makes me wanna cry, thinking about it.

I love you, Charlie. Rest in peace, bra.

-Baby G, Marin

From The Beat: We're very sorry for your loss. At least he, little did he know, made some serious closure with you by telling you how much he loved you. We can imagine how his death hurt your life. Have you ever thought about how his murder is influencing your life now? What do you imagine your brother would want you to know now, if you could talk to him, that he learned? How do you imagine he would feel if he knew that you're so sad, lonely and grieving because of him and that somehow you may be following his foot steps? Can you follow what you might imagine may be his heart and live your life in a good way, without any mess? We hope so. Don't let what happened to him destroy your life. Use his death as a reason to live healthy and safe! RIP Charlie.

A Perspective On Life

We got eyes, nose, ears, etc. We got most of the things cats and dogs have. When animals are not on a leash, they are in their cage after generation and generation.

Our minds (humans) have a different look and perspective on life. So other humans keep us in cages if we do not act like them. Animals do not act like us, that's why they are in cages, but most of us cannot act like everyone else. So now I can relate to these animals.

If you think about it, we are animals to the government. We go in our cage, they bring us a tray and we drink water. We go out for a little outside activity and come back in. To me that sounds like a dog's life. The way we are raised is the only way we know how to behave. We cannot act a certain way, because that's the way we are — it is just natural. We are humans like everyone else, but we take out our feelings in different ways.

For example: when people are raised a certain way, that's when they develop their trust, knowledge, etc. From people we all learn a certain way and we all have different perspectives on life. We act the only way we know how to. If I see other people acting different, I can't relate to them and automatically act like them. If this does not make sense to you all, take every word I said and detail it. Go to the very root of each word, add it all up, and you will understand. The way the human mind works is a trip. Think about it.

-Anony Mouse U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This makes almost perfect sense to us, Mr. Mouse... The qualifying word "almost" concerns these issues we have with what you wrote. When dogs go off on other dogs or people, they, too, get special treatment — locked cages and muzzles. They, too, are only doing what they've been trained to do, but human society will not accept some of that learned behavior. You, like all of us, have learned from being around other people and seeing how they act. Up to a certain age, it is all you know, and only a fool would expect a child to know how to act differently from the models he's been given. (Of course, there are MANY fools out there...) The problem is this, when what you've been shown is a style of living that preys off or hurts other people, then society responds exactly as it does when that dog bites someone. So, the hope is that, as you grow and begin to see other models for living, you can incorporate them into your life so that you do not have to pay the price the dangerous dog has to pay. In short, as we mature, we then become responsible for choices which we can make based on alternatives that our adult minds let us see and examine — and take or reject as thoughtful human beings. Your description of life in a cage — of being treated like animals by the government — is right on, and needs no qualifying adverbs, such as "almost." Worse, we see no evidence that it does anything to expand those learning experiences we talked about above. One thing this piece shows us, for sure, is that you have a first-rate mind. Not everyone is so blessed. So take it as a gift, and use it, use it, use it. Thank you for this very thoughtful piece.

Creepin'

hidden in a shadow
 creepin' in the dark
 split in quarter pieces
 like a needle in my vein
 attached to my skin
 deep within the cells
 lay the pits of hell
 circulating through my veins
 as water circulates through rain
 pain is numb
 i have no feel of control
 an untold pattern holds me away
 deteriorating atom by atom
 cell by cell
 for the equation is like a riddle
 but filled with a juicy skittle
 an iceberg at the bottom of the ship
 it's the end of the trip
 hop in and sailin'
 it gets real cold
 fire gets hot but it's too far away
 i'm frozen and can't feel my feet
 iced out from head to toe
 with a temptation to blow
 my desire let it go
 as long as the blood keep flowing
 the heart keeps going
 stroke after stroke
 holding on for your life
 trying not to choke
 like a high that ain't gonna die
 pulling me under with a grasping force
 with an out of control desire
 a never-ending wire
 no release
 the pressure will only increase
 destroying me inside out
 determination to take control
 suffocation with every breath
 sucking my lungs out my body
 not one by one but two by two
 face black and blue
 pulling my intestines to my stomach
 my stomach out my mouth
 strain by strain
 fighting the pain
 turning blue and red
 fighting the dead
 i lay purple and cold
 barely eighteen years old

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sounds like this poem could be called "Death By Overdose" or "Died Going Cold Turkey" or some such. And while it's true that a spiritual death can feel just as intense, it's not over when the last bit of your old life has been spent. On the contrary, that's the beginning of the new. Dying to the past to improve your view of a possible future, may feel like you're turning into a corpse or something worse, but it's as illusory as the visions invoked by a needle's incision sending dope through your veins, which is to say, it's all in your brain, a spiritual death, the death of the ego that held you in check, the death of the addict within, just wipes the slate clean — so you can be born again, like in a dream; only it's real! All that pain will pass and more will be revealed. So keep your eyes peeled. Meanwhile, keep writing your poems with the intensity of all that you know.

A Day In Ninjas Minds In The Unit

This ninja A.) Facing some hardcore time and might not see a day of light.
 This ninja B.) In here getting snitched on when deep down inside, the snitch knows he did it.
 This ninja C.) cut his dreads. Now he's a new man.
 This ninja D.) writes six-six-six everywhere.
 This ninja E.) talkin' about he got this and he got that, but really he ain't got shhh.
 This lil' ninja F.) Talking 'bout he put ninjas six feet deep.
 This ninja G.) wanna get out the game, but he can't because he gotta fight for his life.
 This ninja H.) ain't got no moms, so nobody comes to see him.
 This ninja I.) always wonders why his piece ain't in The Beat, but today it's in there.
 This ninja J.) always be trying to preach to us that the Lord is real when He don't believe in God himself.
 This ninja K.) been here over two years and still ain't getting' out.
 This ninja L.) went to the "Y" and came back, and now he's getting out.
 This ninja M.) went to the "Y," got out, and came back on a new case.
 This ninja N.) robbed a bank and is getting out in less than a month.
 You know something is suspicious about that.
 This ninja O.) didn't know his daddy, but he's always thinking about him.
 This ninja P.) claims a turf that he don't know nothing about 'cause he ain't been there a day in his life.
 This ninja Q.) always says he's gonna run in this cat's room, but he don't ever do it.
 This ninja R.) really ain't about that action.
 This ninja S.) was right there when his cousin got popped.
 This ninja T.) cops rims everyday of the week.
 This ninja U.) been shot in the head, but still livin' and fightin' a murder case.
 This ninja V.) like staff, but staff don't like him.
 This ninja W.) be whipping his car, but don't own no car; gotta steal somebody else's.
 This ninja X.) always talking about Malcolm X like he know him.
 This ninja Y.) always yapping at the mouth.
 This ninja Z.) wanna get out the game and be an example to his young ones.

-Mainy Bo', 150 Crew

From The Beat: Is this ninja you speak of the same ninja or is this piece about the many different ninjas we/you come across in juvenile? We can't respond to every ninja because we can't devote all the space it would take to respond to ninjas A-Z. However, the majority of this piece is sadly negative. Why do you think so many young ninjas are so negative? Why can't we read, "This ninja said the hell with being locked up. This ninja ain't no animal?" Or, "This ninja is ready to change the way his life is unfolding?" However, this goes out to ninjas A-Z: Y'all are better than this. Worry about yourselves first before y'all worry about anyone or anything else. Regardless of your situation or background, you're not making your situation better by sitting behind bars talking mess and reliving war stories. We hope ninjas A-Z get out and stay out and truly make a difference in their community.

Going Home

Today is my last time being able to write The Beat Within. I'm here at Walden House, spending my last few days the best way I can. I'm finally going home on Tuesday, the 16th. I've been here since September 13th, and this place has not only shown me new ways to live without drugs, but has given me that last chance to really appreciate everything I had.

I hated the fact that I had to come here, but I love everything that I've learned here. Now it's my time to go back out to the real world. It's going to be a struggle for me to be back at home, because I'm going back to the same people and places, but I'm hoping that I can stay positive and sober and keep in mind everything I was taught here at PSK.

I want to thank you, Beat, for your inspiring words. I'm thankful for getting the chance to write my feelings out and be heard. God bless, Beat. With that, I'm done. Goodbye.

-Pinky, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: While we rejoice with you for growing into the young woman who is equipped to leave here a different and stronger person, selfishly we will miss you! You have contributed much, and this piece is another major contribution! We hope all the girls, especially the ones you've just arrived, can read your words and gain strength from them. They may not be ready to hear the lessons you have learned, but at least they can see that what they think and feel today may not be what they think and feel tomorrow. Thank you for your kind words to The Beat, but the debt is from us to you. You know, Pinky, this does not need to be the last piece you write in our pages. We would love to read your experiences as you move back into the world — the hurt, the joy, the triumphs, the failures... the things that define all our lives. We wish you only the best. Thank you.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

I'm Dying

I got blood stains all on my tee
 Asking God, "Why it had to be me?"
 Why I have to be the one?
 Why I have to die so young?
 Would things of been different if I chose to run?
 But being on the run ain't no fun
 Thoughts constantly runnin' through my head
 I can't believe I'm about to be dead
 My life seems to be up
 No excuses, ifs, when's, or but's
 This is it
 I guess it's time to go
 The pain is unbearable
 Why it got to be so slow?
 The knife is twisting and turning
 Worse yet is the bullet in my lung keeps burning
 I'm panting hard tryin' to catch my breath
 I close my eyes for a second
 I see death
 I open up and see my loved ones
 A light shines bright, but it's no sun
 Wonderin' whether I'll go to heaven or hell
 Knowin' I can't be saved by the bell
 Wonder who'll really miss me at all

Wonderin' when my mom gon' get that call
 Knowin' its gon' kill her inside of her heart
 Piercing her soul like a dart
 I can't stop it
 Death always seeks me
 No thoughts in my head
 Death speaks to me
 My heart starts to slow down
 It barely beats
 In a little while, I'll be six feet deep
 The breathing gets harder by the minute
 My battle with death is over
 I cannot win it
 My eyes shut for the final time
 No more writing anymore rhymes
 My soul bust out the seams
 I wake up breathing hard
 It was just a dream.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow! This is a very powerful piece! However, it troubles us that you would go so in depth in writing about a topic that people tend to shy away from. What inspired such a piece? You should consider, you writing intros to your pieces, given the following you have as a writer/poet. US readers always want to know, what and why. Nevertheless, in this epic flow you paint a picture with your words is very impressive. As we read your piece, we felt every word. We hope that you would do us the honor of writing a piece about the complete opposite of dying, which is living and the beautiful things in your life. If you can write a masterpiece on dying, we assume your piece on life would be a work of art!

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

No Pain, No Gain

My head is throbbing with pain
 Floor wet with rain
 There's nothing to gain
 Picture my life in a frame
 Nothing nice to look at,
 But it's truth, all fact
 I'm sharp like a thumbtack
 Prayin' everyday my line won't
 go flat,
 But it's inevitable
 My life seems regrettable,
 But I don't regret
 I forgive,
 But don't forget
 Take nothing to the heart
 Never end, never start
 Never show no love
 I feel below, yet above
 Never get hurt
 Emotions don't work
 Never show I'm weak
 Always stay on my feet
 Don't miss a beat

Never walk, always leap
 Takin' a chance
 Fail or enhance
 It really didn't matter
 I can't get sadder
 I'm at the bottom of the pit
 Expressing wisdom and wit
 I can't sink no more
 Dead at the core,
 But I refuse to fail
 Never lose, but excel
 My time just began
 A boy, yet a man
 Obtain the goal
 Never lose my soul
 Soon be at the top
 Keep going, never gonna stop!

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What inspired you to write this piece? What is the goal you want to obtain upon moving on from the hall? Why do you say emotions don't work? Do you think it is healthy to keep your emotions bottled in? We know you know the answer. We hope you never stop challenging and expressing yourself. Great writing!

Loneliness

When I feel lonely I do a lot of things. Being lonely is a mood to me, not a emotion. When I feel lonely, I like to express myself; I like to talk about what is making me feel lonely.

As I sit in here juvenile hall, I get lonely a lot. This is the most critical part of my life, which is to say, my teenage years. I get a lot of attention at home from family, to friends, to my community.

I don't have too many negative things I do to keep me from being lonely, but I have experienced a lot of negative things. However, at the moment I do have one negative thing that keeps me from feeling lonely, and that is popping pills.

Pills (ecstasy) will have me in my own world, not thinking about anything, just freeing me from my problems. But I guess pills didn't free me too much, because it got me in here.

-Doug-e-fresh, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Tell the truth! So what else frees you from obsessing about your problems that doesn't create new problems at the same time, like running the risk of losing your freedom behind doing it? Sports? Movies? Writing? Reading a book? Talking to a friend? Have you ever tried meditating? Just sit or lie in a quiet place, breathe slowly and count your breaths. Let thoughts pop into your mind but don't hold onto any of them; just keep breathing and counting, and they'll get pushed aside by other thoughts, and others still. Then you begin to relax as you feel the reality of breathing slowly and the unreality (at this moment) of your thoughts — which isn't to say you never need to think about problems, but obsessing and stressing usually doesn't help you either think or solve. You feel? As you get more practiced, you'll learn to "let go" at anytime and anyplace, and you'll learn how to let go faster and have it last longer. (As for the pills, don't underestimate the power of addiction, in which case: "One is too many and a thousand never enough." So just don't take that first one.)

When I feel lonely, I like to express
 myself; I like to talk about what is
 making me feel lonely

Blast From The Past

lookin' back on the past
moving faster than a nascar
couldn't catch it on paper
in every direction
left to right destroying
everything in sight
going on a mission
turned out to be an expedition
count after count
i ain't got time for the system
i ain't got time for the game
all i got time for is to earn my name
no bullship, i don't give a what
best know my name
doin' it up for a fact
i ain't got time for that whack shhh
can't be on that crack shhh
gotta be about it
been flossin' and glossin'
best know 'bout me
but a better way i see
not locked up in a penitentiary
stackin' house and shhh
forget about a lick
getting it quick
robbin' a ninja and bursting from behind
'cause he caught me slippin' on the grind
i ain't got time
this life is mine
i'm in it to win it
and i will succeed
to fulfill my every need

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Right on! But you're skipping over the lesson straight to the conclusion, which is cool in a way, but risks getting lost in further confusion. Yeah, it's easier to skip over the remorse, the grief — the shame, pain and disgrace — but if you find the courage to face the truth, it will lay the foundation that will get you through to your new life of self-fulfillment. However, you may discover that what you really needed all along, was more than money, power and fame to make you feel strong, but to find the strength within that sets you free to begin to identify your deeper needs. Doing right and caring for others is the key, and then when you get showered with money, fame and power — you'll see straight through the fake and know what to make of your life, know what to take and what to give, know how to live.

Two Months of Hell!

Everyone have their own picture, our moments of hell. Mine is being locked up for two months, even though two months ain't that long. But, to me, it seems like years. I was locked up for just assault, and I'm still waiting for a group home to come get me.

But I don't blame no one but myself for getting locked up. I also regret fighting. Now I learned there's more to life than fighting. Everyone that came in with me all got out, too...

The time I spend here is lost, can't ever get it back. But I guess this experience really taught me a lot, from being more mature to respecting others. I would like to thank the counselor.

-Mk U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It always makes us happy when a young man comes here and opens his eyes to the possible consequences of his choices. When you get out and are tempted to fight, or anything else that can land you back under the control of strangers, just keep remembering that if two months feels like years, what do years being locked feel like? Thank you for this.

Faces

Eyes to the sky, hand on the gun,
Mind on the crime, moms says I'm blind
That I seem not to see time go by behind bars
But worse, my life on the line
Mad faces, sad faces, dead homies, unforgotten faces
Damn, my hood's billboard RIP faces
Homies on murda cases
Another murda, another RIP shirt
Another cryin' mom for her son won't be comin' home
He's put to rest on a concrete mattress and a fluffy tombstone
Now she gone be alone while her son is the newest member on the billboard RIP faces
Hope you ain't the next on the front pages 'cause there's no ages
To the trigga happy rages nor to the jail cages
You can't time it on paces
Man, I still wonder where are the happy faces
Gangs, crimes, and times
No smile, only cry now, and cry later
Lil' bit of lovers but more haters

-Lil' Lazy, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You see things for what they are, Lil' Lazy. So what are you doing or trying to do to change what you see so clearly? We know you can't change the streets that leave their trail of death and pain and tears, so what can you do to change yourself and your relationship to these deadly streets? Do you want to change? How? For whom? What's the most important help you could get to make the changes that we can see you so clearly must make? Don't wait until that one mistake from which there is no returning...

I guess this experience really taught me a lot,
from being more mature to respecting others.

Us

I thought you said this bond will never end
Now it's like I can't even call you my "friend"
We had passion, happiness, love, all in one blend
It now seems like hatred is all you want to send
Why did things happen to turn out the way they did?

Whatever happened to "us?"

How 'bout our kid?

You left me alone

Heard you're in another state

I tried to save us,

But I guess it wasn't our fate

I ain't gon' lie

I've been missing you of late,

But the only thing to do is patiently wait

'Cause when I get out,

I hope we come in contact

Taught a thug the right way, how to act

The words you said all sounded true

"Together, forever"

Yeah, I believed you,

But look at me

Ain't got no letters from my boo

I can't believe you left me alone and blue,

But in fact I was the one who left

You was goin' right and I took the left.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If true, we hope you and this girl are able to work things out, but in case things don't, we hope you'll always be there for your child. It is not your child's fault that the relationship went sour. Sometimes we don't realize how much we appreciate something until it is gone. However, stay strong for your child, be it the one you write about today (if true), or the one(s) you have down the road, once your life is free of the system. Remember, your child didn't ask to come to this world, but since it is here, you should do everything in your power to take care of it. Hopefully your child will inspire you to stay on the right path and stay focused on doing positive. You have a gift! Use it!

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

My Crazy Life

This crazy life I live

Full of:

Hate

Muerte (death)

Pain

Loss

Broken forgiveness

Shame

Gangs

Drugs

Sex

Fighting

Hurt

All of it adds up to unforgiven pain. Who am I? What will I be?

Please take me out of the street!

Broken

-Speedy, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: You are not broken, Speedy, just bruised and hurting. The life you've experienced has given you strength. You've survived what might kill a weaker person. Use that strength to move beyond that hard past. The drugs you have taken to camouflage your pain have only brought you more. Doesn't it stand to reason that as you clear your mind of those chemicals, that you will regain control over your life, and as you do, you will be able to guide yourself in entirely new directions. Only you can take yourself out of the streets. There is no doubt that you have the inner strength to do that. But being able to do it is not the same as doing it. That remains for you to decide to do, and then to do it.

Be your self

A habit I need to break, is not accepting guilt. I always say I am not guilty even when I am! And I always say I'm right even when I know I'm wrong! That's why I'm here in Alameda County Juvenile Hall.

I'm always trying to be something I'm not. I always try to fit in. But one thing I noticed about the kids that surround me here at the Hall, is that the large majority of these kids are not bad — they were just trying to fit in and got caught doin' the crime they didn't even want to do.

-Kenneth, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow! What a great observation. Don't think anyone's ever put it quite so clearly: "... caught doin' the crime they didn't even want to do." Hmm. And you're suggesting that the solution begins with simple honesty: admitting when you're wrong and accepting guilt when you're guilty. Getting honest with yourself is essential, and getting honest with others is a valuable practice that while it may not win you more friends than anyone else, the friends you make with honesty are not fake!

Through Winter And Summer

He sat in sadness

Through the cold winter

While she was in love

And she looked like summer

He spent his time writing and writing

And he started singing

Outside her window

She heard him there

Not even knowing

The rain was so bare

She reached out a hand

Through his foggy winter

And her sun from within

Got even brighter

All he could see

Was the brightness above

He reached out

And touched the hand of love

Warmth he'd touched

And it spread through his body

Now his wintery heart

Felt no longer empty

He stood there

Now sadness was gone

And he saw his summer there

Singing his song

Then he asked her a question

"What have you done?"

And she replied nicely

"Your weakness has won"

She looked at him dearly

Then asked him quiet kindly

"How long will you love me?"

He smiled and nodded

"My baby summer

You've taken my winter

So I'll love you now

And I'll love you forever"

-Tatizzle, Marin

From The Beat: What a poem you deliver! Somehow this lady with her summery spirit helped the man overcome his sadness. What inspired this beautiful, tender poem in you? What did the girl mean when she told the man, "Your weakness has won"? Was his weakness his sadness? If so, how did it win?

STANDOUT

La Soledad Para Mí

Para mí la soledad es muy sola y principalmente en la cárcel. La soledad trae cosas que dan ganas de suicidarse y hacerse daño a sí mismo. Uno nunca está solo aunque digan que lo están. Siempre están con Dios quien es el el quien no podemos ver pero lo podemos sentir.

La soledad para mí es muy triste y me pongo a pensar en mi madre y mi linda familia y mis hermanos.

La soledad es algo muy difícil de contener. Es muy feo tener a alguien con quien uno comparte la mesa de la cárcel, el cuarto, jugar y después que esa persona salga, y vuelves a quedar solo. Como les digo uno siempre están con Dios y con la Virgen. El duerme con nosotros y El se levanta con nosotros.

La soledad es muy triste para mí, porque en este momento, en lo que escribo en este pedazo de papel, me siento triste, solo y alejado de mi madre y hermanos.

Dios los bendiga mis hermanos!

From The Beat: Es verdad la soledad es una de las enfermedades que les da hasta a el mas sano del mundo. Estamos totalmente de acuerdo con lo que has dicho y esperamos que esa soledad que tienes algún día llegue a su fin. Para que eso pase, tienes que poner todo lo que este en tu alcance. ¿Crees que puedas? No te sientas solo. Nosotros siempre estaremos ahí aunque sea una hora a la semana para escucharte y darte los ánimos que necesitas para seguir adelante. Si Dios está contigo a todo momento, no estas solo. Dios te bendiga a ti también.

For Me, Loneliness.....

For me, loneliness is very lonely and it is so, principally in jail. Loneliness brings things that give one the urge to commit suicide and hurt oneself. One is never alone, even though y'all may say y'all are. Y'all are always with God, who is the one who we cannot see, but we can feel Him.

For me loneliness is very sad and I start to think about my mother and my wonderful family and my brothers.

Loneliness is something very difficult to contain. It's a very ugly feeling to have someone with whom you share a table in jail, the room, play with, and then after that person gets out, return to being alone again. Like I'm telling y'all, y'all are always with God and with the Virgin. He sleeps with us and He wakes up with us.

For me, loneliness is very sad because at this very moment, as I write this piece on paper, I feel sad, lonely, and separated from my mother and my brothers.

May God bless my brothers!

-Elvin B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's true: Loneliness is one of the illnesses that even the healthiest person in the world contracts. We agree with you wholeheartedly with what you have said and we hope that someday the loneliness that you have comes to an end. In order for that to happen, you have to do everything that's within your reach. Do you believe you can? Don't feel lonely. We'll always be there, even if it is for one hour a week to listen to you and give you the support that you need to continue striving forward. If God is with you at all times, you're not alone. May God bless you, too.

I Hope We Get Through This

When I look into your eyes, my beautiful one
 You shine like eva since we've began
 I can see you from hundreds and thousands of miles
 away
 Nothin' gone be different from the past till today
 Because of you my heart is filled
 Thinkin' of what I had I should've never killed.
 Instead you and I should've just chilled.
 Because we didn't everything be came so real
 I hope we get though this just fine.
 You already no but I'm a let you know again you're
 always on my mind.
 I hope you never let go.
 'Cause even if you do my life for you will grow and
 grow
 Mamaz it don't matter that my case is lookin' bad.
 Because all we need to do is think positive and be
 glad.
 Not mad.

-Mike Jonez, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Week after week you write these heartfelt romantic poems about the way you and your girl are trying to hold on with each other even as you struggle with the miseries of your case. It's really good to see the way you've moved towards positive with it. Of course that positivity isn't just about your girl, but about how you are keeping your whole mentality together in the face of an incredibly stressful case. So what DO you do to stay positive? What's the hardest time of day for you? Easiest?

Please Forgive Me 2007

You know, I just wanna first say that I'm sorry.
 I'm sorry for letting you down.
 I'm sorry for letting you frown.
 I'm sorry for being a clown
 I'm sorry for not being homebound
 if I could restart I will back then I shouldn't just
 chilled,
 The feelings I feel were unexpected, my family felt
 they were neglected
 Now I feel ashamed
 'Cause I'm the one to blame
 I wanna just erupt like a flame
 But I gotta step up my game and be tamed
 Dear gram: I'm sorry for not using my brain
 I'm sorry and I love you

-Lil' Rascal, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a beautiful poem – not just because the feelings in it are so strong but also because of those vivid images: "I wanna erupt like a flame!" that's a powerful image right there. Now that you've revealed this articulate poetic side, we're looking forward to hearing more of it. We mean it!

Spinning

Why am I always alone.
 My eyes fill up with water,
 Why moms never at home?
 Why am I alone?
 I am looking for love, I am just trying to stay strong.
 Keeping myself from doing wrong,
 Tell me what's going on, my head is spinning.
 Man is it because I am alone
 Behind these concrete walls waiting to go home
 That's why I'm all alone.

-D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We asked for a piece on loneliness, and man you came up with a diamond hard poem, each line of it something that could cut you with its pain and beauty. We love the way you set it up as a long question, with a terrible answer. If you keep writing moving words like this, the kinds that touch other peoples' hearts when they read them, then you'll never really be alone.

Hey Lonely Boy

Man, Every time I come in here I feel lonely 'cause, all my peers never call me. I think they some gold-diggers cause I don't get no letters man and when I call them they be like hello. But when I ask can you write me it's always some excuse like "I don't know how to form the address" or "My mom don't want you to know the address." So when it comes time for letters, I just hope for the best, prepare for the worst and just sing to myself:

"hey there lonely boy, lonely boy that girl never ever once loved you and go to sleep cause no one loves to be lonely."

-DeAndre, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ouch. Letters must be the most precious thing you can get in the Hall, a connection to the outside world, your family, your friends, and of course if you had a girl this must be the only way to stay in touch. But you know what, even if you were getting a hundred letters a day, it wouldn't make up for the joy of just being out there. We almost want to say hold on to this pain and loneliness. Write about it, remember it, sing these blues to yourself every day, and stamp them onto your memory like a tattoo, so that you can strengthen your resolve not to have to feel it again. Ever.

The Worst Experience of My Life

I was just released from a youth placement called Fouts Spring Youth Facility, August 18, 2006. My charges were 2nd degree robbery with enhancement of a firearm which got me sentenced to a year at this placement already serving two months at Coco (Contra Costa) County Juvenile Hall and a month at Solano County Detention Facility pending placement. It wasn't at all a cool experience for me. I stressed a lot, I had to cut my hair, I missed my grandmother's passing and funeral and worst of all I missed my daughters' birth. It was the worst experience of my life.

When I was released it was the start of a new life. I stayed drug and trouble free for two months and all of a sudden it came tumbling down on me one step at a time, and before you know it, here I am, back locked up only in Alameda country this time, a first for me. Hopefully on my next court date they let me free!

-Lamarr, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The loss of your grandmother, the birth of your daughter... Man, it's like you had the very cycles of life ripped from you: Death and birth.... That's what losing freedom does, it takes everything away. But the one thing they can't take is your future, that's on you. And you have a beautiful daughter waiting to be a part of her daddy's life, and you also have the knowledge that you CAN stay drug and trouble free, you did it before. Now you can look back and figure out exactly what steps led to the last stumble, and learn from those mistakes so you don't repeat them... and then never have a terrible experience like this again. You can do it for your future, for your daughter! What's your plan to staying out?

Looking Back At Past Experiences

Looking back on my past
 makes me mad
 because I was lost in this world
 like a wild animal,
 doing whatever,
 smoking weed, and skipping school.
 I was tired of people telling me that I was wasting my talent
 because they didn't know what was going on with me at the
 time
 because I was going through a lot of stuff
 such as being locked up, and losing my mom,
 so peace out, Beat.
 This yo' boy Lil' Sam. God bless.

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We deeply regret to hear about your loss every time you share with us Sam. May your mother rest in peace. However, you should not use her death as an excuse to justify your actions because that's messed up. Do you think she wanted to die? Of course not. If one person tells you something, that's his/her opinion, but if you're hearing the same thing coming out of different people's mouths, there's probably a valid reason why. If hearing this over and over was making you mad, it's probably because you know it's the truth. Give something positive for your mother to look at when she looks down on you. Be the good man that you are!

I've Been Lonely My Entire Life

I have been lonely and alone my entire life. I lived in a house with four people. Our house was very dysfunctional. When I became a teen, I was living in a trailer with no furniture, no doors, windows, carpets or food. I lived there with the Albino, the Psycho and the Angel. We had a burn pit in the middle of the living room floor and a lab in the kitchen. There I wasn't lonely. That was the only time in my life that I wasn't lonely.

-Btg, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: What do you think it means that cooking drugs in the middle of a trailer with nothing but a burn pit inside is the only time you felt a part of something? Is that what you want to be a part of forever? We think the loneliness you describe is the feeling one has when leaving behind what is most familiar and comfortable (even if it isn't good) and moving into the unknown. We know that growing up can be a very painful, very lonely experience, but by seeking a sense of belonging in the depths, you only keep yourself down. You may not believe it from where you sit, but we are very sure that if you give yourself a chance, you will move into a new reality, one that gives you comfort and nurturing in an environment that is healthy and not deadly... and that you will look back on those days as something to be grateful not to have to return to.

I Will/Won't stop smoking

One habit that I have and maybe won't stop for a while is — weed. Smoking weed is everything for me. Smoking takes me to another level, and it makes me calm down and relax.

The one thing that stops me from smoking, is being in here. But now that I think about it, I feel a lot better without smoking! So maybe when I get out, I'll stop — or try very hard to stop. I hope things work out for me.

-Ruben, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That is a major insight when you write that you “feel a lot better without smoking”! Hold onto that, ‘cause on that basis you can begin to plan your attack on your smoking habit. You can’t go at it halfway, or given how much you loved, it will swallow you up faster than you can fall to your knees and pray. Tell all your friends you’re dead serious, and ask them not to smoke around you — then you’ll see who your real friends are. Have you ever tried meditating to calm yourself down. Just sit or lie in a quiet place, breathe slowly and count your breaths. Let all those thoughts jumping off in your mind go wherever they want, but don’t hold on to any of them, and like watching a movie or something, they will come to an end, leaving you calm and relaxed. The more you practice, the easier this gets. Eventually, you may even learn how to simply “let it go” wherever and whenever you need to. (Some use this method as they turn their worries over to God: “Let go and let God.”) Then you can feel better, calm, relaxed and clear-headed all at the same time.

The Beat Within

I think 2007 will be different from 2006, because there are a lot of things already different being made different for 2007 (but I think there will be as many homicides as in 2006). I even think the government will be changed in ways, because there are lot of things wrong with the government.

For me personally, 2007 will be different than 2006, because I will graduate high school and will not come back to jail! I will do a lot of things differently in 2007. I will make different choices because you are supposed to learn from mistakes. And since you make mistakes all year every year, it's good to learn from them! If I pay attention and learn, I can be a better person. If you do, too, I guarantee your 2007 will be different from 2006.

RIP: all my family and friends that's gone.

-Lamar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope the choices you make in 2007 not only keep you out of juvenile jail but also out of harm's way. Lots of things can make you an intentional or unintentional target: slanging, posting, riding, or even just kicking it when you feel like trouble's about to jump off (like at a party or whatever). If you go to school and get a part-time job, you'll both have some money to spend and be out of sight of the town's various mobs.

As I Walk Through The Valley In The Shadow Of Loneliness

Loneliness

Striving to feel happiness
Looking through fog and mess
I can see the better days
Tired of my lonely ways
I'm sitting in my cell alone
But someone's here
God is far in heaven
And his presence is near
When I cry to Him
He scatters all fear
I feel so lonely
Even as I sit here
Talking to my homie
Tragic thoughts
Rollin' through my dome
I need some company
I wanna go home
The Beat is within my heart
Always and forever

-Canas, Marin

From The Beat: When you're home do you also feel lonely? Do you have friends on the outs? Do you go to school? What do you do by yourself or with your friends for fun? What is causing this fog and pain? It's wonderful that your God helps you get through your time in jury and we hope, when you're home again, you can start over and see the sun clearly and behold it's brightness and glory! If you need help this is the time to ask an adult whom you trust for just that, help.

The Block Is Hurting Those I Love

I have a habit that aren't really good for me, and that is to stop disrespecting my mom and stop hanging on the block. The reason why I need to stop disrespecting my mom is because I know that she is by my side. She helps me proceed and lets me know that's it's not the end, just keep proceeding with life. When I'm locked down, she tells me to keep my head up and tells me to do my time, so I won't have to keep coming back.

My habit is hanging on the block. I need to put a stop to that, because I could have been dead so many times and so many people want to kill me. But my family members have taken bullets for me. So I need to stop going back. Every time I get out, that's where I went, so I need to stop.

The habit hurt me so many times that I then got depressed, and I'm hurting other people. An' it's getting me back and making me sad, so I need to break out this habit.

-Brittany U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You know, Brittany, everything you say is true, but your own experience should tell you that just saying you need to stop going back is not enough. If every time you get out, that's where you go, then you need more than just promises, which are so easy to make when you're alone and locked up, but so hard to keep when you're free and making your own choices. Besides your own commitment to do it, what would help you the most to remember how much your mother has sacrificed for you and why it's time now for you to go to give back [by staying off the block, and therefore staying free. That's the gift your mother wants from you. Can you give it to her?

Live and Learn (The Hard Way)

What's crackin', Beat? Me, shiznit, just chillin' up in the Hall. I'm kinda stressing, kinda happy, because with all that time I robbed them people, now my conscience is coming back and biting me in the butt and just messin' with me — but helping me at the same time, because I'm learning what I did was wrong. And the reason I'm happy, is 'cause I'm finally learning what's good and what's not.

-Porkey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, what a great little piece! By the time you read it in The Beat though, you'll be in max. So the stress must be harder, but judging from this piece, you'll still be on the road to wisdom you've just started!

Serenity

I'm in the new jail
 I feel serenity
 Wishing and hopin'
 I do right once I'm free
 When I go home
 There's a lot to reveal
 That the system is thinking wrong
 Because I want to be successful
 And I'm strong
 I'm desperate to leave
 But it's hard to believe
 Because I have goals
 I plan to achieve
 And I want to finish
 My year program, mainly

-Rosevette U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Having goals to succeed give you a head start. We wish you all the good luck you can have, but we also know that "wishing and hopin'" and even good luck are not enough. What is your plan for getting those goals? What will you do first, after you go home and enjoy the company of those who love you?

Muneca

What's up to all doin' time? Well, I'm leaving tomorrow, maybe to a group home in Fresno. It's hella weird, 'cause I never imagined me, Melissa, going to placement. It's just not my thing.

Well, let me tell you a story. I once had a kitten, her name was Muneca. She was beautiful. I used to lay her on my chest when I would sleep, 'cause she was so tiny and light. One day she cried soooo much! I couldn't stand it no more. So I took her to the hospital and found out she had pneumonia and ringworms. I got ringworms all over my chest. It was so severe! I cried so bad, though, 'cause they had to put her to sleep and she was only one month old, so tiny. So now I have scars on my chest (physically) and in my heart (emotionally.) RIP, Muneca.

- Canas, Marin

From The Beat: We're so sorry about your kitty, Canas. She sounds almost like she was part of your family, even if it was for a mere month. When you're home again, will your mother let you have another kitten? If so, why don't you look in the want ads or go to the humane society and pick out another baby kitten that has its shots and is healthy?

Twice

Guns in they waist, people start to shoot
 All ma boys take they thangs out, but what should I do
 Then I start to think, should I drop my gun
 But everybody at the party would think I was a punk if I
 started to run
 Shots ring out from this crew's main ninja
 Then without thinking I pulled my thang trigga
 The atmosphere got colder. I took his life, now his
 legacy was over
 I am doing a lot of time
 This could've all been avoided without that one crime
 Now I'm doing 25 to life.
 I wouldn't be here if I would of thought twice!

-Pooh Bear U4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There's a very important moral to your story, but we're not sure you know exactly what it is. The time to "think twice" is not when you're with your boys strapped and ready, but long before you get there. Once you strapped, the gun begins to think for you. Instead of pulling the trigger, the trigger pulls you. No, the time to think twice is before you ever put that toy in your waistband, before you ever walk out of your house strapped, before you ever join your crew carrying that deadly weapon. The time to think twice is right now, and it appears from this piece that that's just what you're beginning to do. Good for you! Keep doing it!

Don't Wait Till It's Too Late

Pop...pop, pop, pop, pop
 Now your thoughts are racin'
 You're hit, man down
 Yeah, we just got you
 Ambulance comin' for the rescue
 Ninjas came through to test you
 Mamas at the hospital cryin'
 Where her son at?
 Beep, beep, beep
 Yeah, you know that sound...
 Beeeeee...
 Oh no, we know what that means of course
 They was lookin' at a body
 Now they lookin' at a corpse
 Next time think ahead
 'Cause too late
 You can't think without a head

-Birdman U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's tragic that so many of you know the sound of the machine registering that flat line... But knowing what you know, how does this affect your desire to keep doing what you've been doing, or to move to a new level. You conclude with some powerful advice. Is it powerful enough for you to take it?

Momma

Momma I never meant to hurt you.
 I never meant to make you cry.
 But I'll let you know what
 I'll love you even 'til the day I die.
 I'll be out there pretty soon.
 So you can hold me when I cry.
 I'll even keep my head up and have pride.
 But guess what momma, I still survived.

-Sergio, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Excellent piece of writing. It is hard being separated from our families when we are locked up. We only get to see them maybe once a week during visiting. But this isn't the same as being out there at home with them. Being locked up and away from our homes and families help us appreciate our loved ones even more. We encourage everyone to never take your families and loved ones for granted. You never know when they will be gone from your life.

Changing My Life For My Son

This is you boy once again this time writin' to you from U7 in this new building. Well, I've been here four months already. I had court today, but nothing happened, so I got to wait a whole month for my next court.

My PO is trying to send me to the rancho. Men I don't know what to do. My baby boy is waitin' for me out here and I need to see him too. I hella miss my Morrito. I can't talk to him. He's only six months old, you feel me.

El tiempo que he estado aqui enserrado me ha abierto los ojos y no voy a cometer los mismos errores nunca mas, lo unico que quiero es my libertad para poder estar con mi hijo. Es lo unico que le pido a Dios. Erick Ismael, mijo TE PROMETO QUE POR TI MY VIDA YO VOY A CAMBIAR. (The time that I've spent locked up here has opened my eyes, and I don't want to make the same mistakes any more. The only thing I want is to be free so that I can be with you, my son. This is the only thing I ask of God. I promise you that I am going to change my life.)

I love you mijo and I'm sorry for not being wit' you en estos momentos.

-Tweety U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What you have written to your son is the most hopeful thing we've read of yours since you started writing in The Beat. You brought this child into the world, so you owe him the promise you make, to change your life so that you can be there for him. Any dog can make a baby, but only a responsible adult can be a father. Don't let him or yourself down.

My Past Is a Terrible Past

My theory is kind of complicated and it failed me terribly. I've done many things out there: I'd steal, lie and cheat. I'd always steal anything, anywhere, anytime. But one thing: people ain't see me stealing nothing 'cause I spy everything.

I lied to my family too much, and they totally believed me, whatever I told them, but I'm a liar! I even lied to girls my age so I would tap them on the bed. They definitely liked it when I'd do it. No matter how many women I had, I'd find more anywhere I'd see a female around.

I'm a cheater because I've cheated with girlfriends, and my girls know that I'm a helluva player out on the street in my game. Why did I love it? Because I got lots of skills and I'm smooth.

But now I've changed. No more stealing, lying and cheating. I've learned a lot through experience. I learned the need to change from being here in juvenile hall. I've been here for seven months now, and I'm finished with the bad part of my life, my bad past.

I'm out of the game because this player has retired. My life was completely crazy and guided by bad vision. I've grown out of the 'hood I'd lie, cheat and steal. I'm learning to live away from the 'hood and its ways. I'm not a troublemaker anymore.

-Dizzy Birdman, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wd like to believe you, but you still seem proud of what you did. If the you think the only thing wrong with how you were living is that it got you in here, then when you're out, you'll soon be thinking that if you're slick enough to get away with it — why not go back to what you used to do? We hope this isn't true, but we fear for you. Do you know that you will not go back to living in the 'hood? 'Cause if you live there, you'll face the same temptations. What's your plan to resist? You lied to everyone else in the past, how do you know you're not just lying to yourself now? This is very serious business, 'cause this little lock up time is just a warning. Tell us, are you practicing telling the truth in large and small things everyday, 'cause just a little lying can have a liar hooked on lies like crackhead to crack. It's a fact. So tell us a little about how you have already changed the way you act. We don't want to discourage you, for a fact, but we know your ego gets off on feeling smooth — but that's the way ultimately to lose. And we think you can be a winner, even if in telling the truth you're a rank beginner.

All Bad

Something that happened to me that was all bad but was really for the good: I would have to say it's me coming to jail. Every time I come to jail I think of it as a blessing. If I hadn't come to jail something worse would have happened.

When I come to jail I'm telling myself I need to slow down, I'm doing too much. I come to my senses. I get to reflect on what I was doing and what I did wrong, how to handle the situation next time. A lot of things come to my mind when I come to jail. A lot of things I do not think of when I'm on the outs.

I think about when I'm locked up, like where I want to be when I grow up. I didn't have my first goal until I came to jail that's a shame. So it doesn't matter as long as I did it. So jail can be a bad place but if you use it the right way and take advantage of it you can get a lot out of it. You can leave a better and stronger person you will leave with a lot more wisdom and knowledge. It's a different you, but it's up to you if you take it with you and keep the positive attitude you had while you were in here.

-Knight, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Easier said than done, right! We always applaud the good intentions that young people develop when they are locked up. But the difficulty is figuring out how to be different on the outs so you don't keep doing the same things that get you in trouble. You say you leave the hall with more knowledge and wisdom. We think this may not be true. You do leave with more reflection, because you've had the time to think - but you are not any more informed when you leave than when you got in. If you are going to change your ways or change your environment on the outs, than you do need knowledge, you do need to inform yourself. How can you do this? Ask yourself what you would like to be involved with when you're on the outs that will take you away from other negative activities and start asking around, search on the internet, use any resources your school or your PO might have to inform you about what you can do to change your lifestyle. Maybe it's going to a Boys and Girls Club, sports, or getting involved with a youth media project...you decide.

Flop, Or To the Top

Sometimes I feel like I am never going to get to the top! I feel like when everything is going right, I always feel like messin' up in the end! And I sometimes feel like the world is so cold that it doesn't care about me. I just want to get away from all the bullshhhh.

And it feels good to be at a state in my life when everything is good — but being where I am now, I feel like I'm nothing! And why I feel this way is because I am away from my family. But I know if I just take it slow, I will make it to the top.

-Glen, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds as if you're getting some real insight into your life and the patterns of behavior you're stuck in — doing well till you seem to almost choose to mess it all up. However, your writing is so abstract that we can't tell exactly what you mean by "make it to the top" or even by "when everything is going right". 'Cause if you mean, you seem to be succeeding in the street grind, then we'd have to say you're still blind to reality. 'Cause the street game (for all it's talk of homie love, etc.) is not only cold but designed to make every player sooner or later fold. It's a loser's dream, to be at the top of the street scene.

My Mother's Tacos

The food that will always make me happy and feel good is — my mother's tacos! My mom makes the best taco. It's because when she makes them, they be so juicy, hot, and perfect! I think the reason why my mom's tacos makes me so happy is because tacos is one of the first meals she ever cooked me — so they're special!

-Doug-e-fresh, ,150 Crew

From The Beat: Hey, beautiful piece! Juicy, hot and perfect as a first-rate taco made by one you love! But now we're hungry for more.

Habit To Break

The number one habit that I have that I need to break is always running away from my problems. I've realized after all this time I've gotten nowhere, worse than when I started and the people who care about me hurt. Running away isn't going to get you anywhere. The problems are still there but your just hiding from them.

Being in juvenile hall has given me time to think and given me a sense of direction for when I get out and what I plan to need. The difference from this time and all the other times I ran is the simple, fact that I am ready to take the support and talk to my family around me.

-Serina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a very mature attitude. Some people go their whole lives trying to run away from their problems but never escaping them. You must confront your own demons, whether they are your own or they were forced on you. You're lucky that you have family you feel you can talk to. Take advantage of it.

For The Beat Within

Well, it's been two months since I've seen the outside, except through a window. And two months gave me a lot of time to "think" that the world doesn't care that I'm angry. I can sit in my cell every damn night, angry, bitter and shut-down, for all the world cares. But I told myself that sitting around angry won't do one thing to change what is wrong in my life. The world will just keep on spinnin'. So I came to understand that I am not helping myself by being so angry.

-Robert, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: We are very impressed with this piece of writing. It is very insightful. You are right on with the message that you are putting out there. The world keeps on spinning no matter what happens in our lives. You can't stop time. Sitting around sulking or being pissed off will do you no good. Being angry doesn't get you anywhere in life. Anger creates a life that isn't very fun. So instead of sitting around stewing in your anger, watching the world go by, dig deep down and figure out where your anger grows then do something to sweep it away.

Loneliness You Can Hear

Loneliness is pain
Loneliness is fame
Loneliness is fear
Loneliness you can hear

-Baby G, Marin

From The Beat: It sounds like you've experienced loneliness. Have you? If so, what are you doing to get away from loneliness?

Dear Moma

Dear Moma,
I know you've been gone for all my life
I know it's hard to say you're doing alright
'cause as you pick up the G-pipe
It makes me wonder if my mom will ever be in sight
Mom, I love you
I just sometimes wonder if it's me you're true to
The drugs is taking over
But I don't want our relationship over
I love you always and forever

-Donshay Johnson/SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Wow. It sounds as if your mother is very important to you but you wonder if you or the drugs are more important to her. It is extremely hard to have a parent doing drugs. Drugs can take over someone's life and hurt those around them. Your mother loves you and will always love you. Unfortunately, parents are not perfect. They may have problems and flaws just as we do at times. The best thing you can do in this situation is take care of yourself and be the strongest and healthiest person for her.

Takin' A Look Back

Lookin back on things made me realize getting locked up this time was for the better.

After getting in an argument with my baby mama on Thanksgiving day about me takin' the baby to my family house, I wasn't around for them after that. I got really mad so I did what I used to do. I started sellin' drugs, pullin' all nighters, getting high and drunk everyday.

I was on the run and I always kept my gun in my trunk wit a box full of shells in my armrest. But I still was there for my son. I dropped off money and I even watched him when my girl had to go somewhere. I even took him to a doctors appointment all by myself. But I wasn't there nearly as much as I shoulda been.

Instead I was out gangbangin', patrolin' the hood and messin' with other girls.

The night I got arrested I was out drinkin' wit' my homeboys and a couple of girls. I was complainin' about how I hated being on the run and no more than five minutes later the 5-0 rolled up. I got ghost but they searched my car and found everything.

Eventually they caught up with me a couple hours later when I went to see my son. I was arrested at my baby mama's house at 1:00 in the mornin'. But lookin' back on that made me realize I was on a path to destruction.

Now that I'm in here, when I get out it's like a fresh start, like I get another chance. So now when I get out this time, I'm gonna be there for my son and my girl like I should of been instead of messin' around in the streets. I could of been dead by now or locked up for a more serious crime than I'm in here for now.

-Lazy 150 Crew

From The Beat: Lazy, sounds like you've got a good handle on this. We hope you stick to your guns (figuratively NOT literally) and do what you say you're going to do. Can't be selfish forever, or you'll definitely lose a good thing. It will make all the difference in how happy and well adjusted your child will be, provided you give your son guidance and act with an even temper. As we all know parents can really mess their kids up too. Everything you do and say will affect your child and how happy he will be. Think long and hard about that.

My Soul

My soul's lost
My soul's covered in frost
My soul's nothing but a hole
My soul's black as coal
My soul's cold as a stone
My soul looks like bone
My soul belongs to the devil
My soul's on that lower level
My soul's full of love
My soul's as white as a dove
My soul's nothing but heat
In my soul God belongs
My soul don't do no wrongs
My soul's as cute as a kitten
This is a lost soul, written.

-Baby G, Marin

From The Beat: You have a very complex soul. What causes it to be cold, black and lost, and what makes it so full of heat and love? What affects your soul so profoundly that causes it to change so much? Sounds to us like you need to write your story Baby G! We want to hear about your life, your dreams, your hopes. We're listening!

I Wish

Mama I wish you were here again
I wish me and you were still friends
I wish you were still clean
Instead of being a dope fiend
I wish I knew you
I wish I still have the flu for you
I wish you didn't do drugs anymore
I still wish you didn't walk out that door
Mama I still care
But I wish you was always there

-Donshay "Big-D," SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: It must be really tough knowing that your mother is using. Drug use affects everyone around us. When we use drugs, we become slaves to this powerful disease called "addiction". When someone is addicted to drugs, that person's true and genuine personality is blanketed by the effects of that drug on their bodies, souls and minds. We encourage you to be healthy for you mom and hopefully one day, she will become clean and healthy as well.

Six Times

I been to jail six times but this is my most hated place it's
a habit for me I guess?
This stuff is getting old
I need to get my life together all because some old stupid
pee test
but I'm not gonna smoke until I get off probation
that's three years
that's a long time
over three stolen cars that's not a reason to get three years
probation
I hate jail
this place is boring
I'm not coming back but that's what I said my
first time
second time
third time
fourth time
fifth time
and
sixth time
but now this it from the heart ...
I'm not coming back!

-Larry, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Oh Larry! You hate jail, yet you're so willing to break the law and risk coming to such a place? How many times? Six times!? Wake the hell up! Breaking the law is not your bag, get a new gig, or go back to your old one, which would be school! Go legit, before you really find yourself in deeper shhh, if you haven't got there yet. Our suggestion to you, again, leave other peoples property alone!

Bad Habit

A habit that I need to break is biting my nails. It is so hard for me to stop. I have been doing it for as long as I remember and that all my life. I can't stop I do it every day sometimes until they bleed.

That's really bad, another habit is my anger sometimes I can't control it. Its like sometimes its like sometimes when I get mad the anger takes over my whole body and I lose control and I do what ever feels good.

Then after I'm done I think of what I did and how I couldn't stop it how it took over me and it gets me in more trouble. It gets me in a bigger situation than I was before I got mad. I know I need to learn how to handle it in a better and positive way but when I'm mad I can't, I lose it. It's like when I get mad I think the world should stop like the world revolves around me. But then reality comes and I realize it doesn't. It's just me feeling the same. I need to get it under control.

-Knight, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Regarding the nail biting, we feel you! We bite our nails too, sometimes until they bleed. It's definitely a way that anxiety escapes - but it's a little way. Anger is a much bigger way. When you have really been through it but have never had the opportunity to really talk about it or you have no support, it makes sense that you would get angry. Many, many people have issues with anger. But it's also true that if you don't find a way to control it, it will control you and your life. The best way is to talk about it, write about it, confront it, exactly what you're doing. But you have to figure out the root of the anger. Why do you feel that inside you? There may be many reasons, but you have to keep questioning and you also have to decide that that is a way that you don't want to be anymore.

My Bad Habit

My name is Danado, and there are habits that I need to break — beginning with standing on the block and looking dumb, 'cause that's the reason I am writing this here.

It's hurting me both ways, limiting my freedom and making me unhappy, as in not being able to leave when I want, and also I can't eat when I want, can't sleep when I want. So, that being the case, I realize I have to drop my habit of posting on the block. It's not for me. If it was — I wouldn't be here!

-Donado, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yes, you've seen deeply into how to recognize a bad habit, as well as recognizing a key bad habit that is the source of other bad habits and the source of your pain and loss of freedom. Your proof, stated in your last sentence, is clear and true. It makes us wonder why more young man can't see it like you. Major props.

Almost Gone

Well, well, well! Here I am, still in hell (Camp)! It could be worse though. I could be sitting at the Hall waiting to go to CYA or something else bad.

I've been here at Camp for seven months and nine days, and I still have a little bit more to go. Ain't that about a trick! I was supposed to be released last month, but that's how it is when you choose the wrong path. All I know, is that I'm a day closer to going home!

This Camp Sweeney program is hella cool! There's no other program that's better than this one. At the end, it was a good ride for me. All I know is that I'm almost free! At the end of this month, I'll be out for good! All right, I'm out. God is Love.

-Fairlas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Congrats on approaching completion of your program. It's a real accomplishment. Major props! But now, the real test begins when you go home. As we recall, you plan to celebrate for, what, a week? Well, that will be a dangerous week for you, if you do. Not just because you might slip up somehow, but also because you might awaken some old demons you've slowly subdued, whether it's drugs or behaviors. Remind us again: What's your plan to stay free? 'Cause that's the ultimate goal, not just going but staying free.

Looking Back At Past Experience

I was hanging out with my friends and I was doing stupid things.

My friends got mad at me so I was thinking that they did not want to be my friends. I stopped hanging out with them and I started doing bad things and bad things were happening to me.

I started going to jail. I stopped listening to my mom because I was doing bad things. I stopped going to school and I got kicked out. I started running in the streets, stealing from people. I started playing with guns. I did not listen. Going in out of jail, I was thinking that too many bad things were happening to me, but it was not because it was me doing bad things.

I should of stopped then. My friends just wanted what was good for me. They knew I was going to end up in jail. And that is what happened.

-Lil' Sammy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have just described your fall from grace. You were just being a kid and then you got caught up in a dangerous lifestyle. What we can't understand is how that happened when even your friends were warning you not to. Usually it's the other way around: kids respond to peer pressure and do things that they might not do otherwise just because they want to be cool. But you did bad things even when your friends were telling you not to. Is it too late to go back to the way you were? Is it too late to make good with the friends you've lost?

Next Step: UC

I've been thinkin' of what I'm goin' to do and how I'm gonna make the best of going to ROP so I've got it. ROP has an academic plan and charter school. So I'm going to get my high school diploma and a trade. Then I'm gonna use the trade to get a job and pay for college. I'm gonna go to a J-C then transfer to a U-C.

What do you think Beat?

-Lil' G, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We think that's a great plan. Good luck, and we hope to toast you on your graduation day.

Focus And Believe

If you focus on your dream or whatever you want that's right for you, you can have it. By praying and talking to God you just have to believe, stay focused and never doubt. Everyday you should pray at nighttime in the morning whenever you need to. Any day you choose and start to believe what God can do for you and start to realize that he have a plan for your life and focus on what's good for you. Whatever you want in your life, God will help you and its not hard 'cause I'm already ready and focused for whatever he has to give me. I believe this so I'm gonna make it happen for myself and never doubt 'cause my day will come.

How it's my turn to tell somebody else who don't know. Lil' Spongebob gone make it, but I ain't gone tell nobody what my plan is because that Man upstairs already know and he works in mysterious ways. I believe that.

For all y'all youngstas locked up just like me and y'all teenagers who think they grown, be about what you talk about in a good way. Lil Spongebob two front teeth doing the thang while locked up. That's my message to y'all

-Stella , 150 Crew

From The Beat: We have two thoughts on what you've said here. One is that faith is so important. If you don't have faith and hope and you don't believe than you become empty and dead inside. So keep praying. The second thing is that no matter how much faith you have, you still have to do for yourself. Miracles may happen, but one of the reasons they are miracles is that they don't happen very often. Hard work on the other hand is likely to pay off. If you work hard in school and are able to get an education, go to community college or even a university, you will overcome many, many obstacles. But if you keep posting on the block and praying, you may soon become disillusioned.

Who Is God?

god is when
i look in the sky
god is
that voice that's telling me
not to get high
god is
that man that stands on the counter
that i give change to
to cure his hunger
i am the one who
put me in jail
but god is
the one who saved my life
so i won't go to hell
god is the one
who took my man's life
but he is
also the one that saved him
and let him go to
heaven with jesus christ
i am the one that crashed the car
but god is the one
who let me live without even a scar
god is the one who said "don't do it"
i am the one who killed
that man with just one bullet
god is the one who does
everything for me
but sometime'
i be like damn why
god just won't let me be
god is the one i pray to every night
and when i talk to god i just know
everything will be all right

-Aleshia, 150 Crew

From The Beat: God saved your life to give you another chance to live your life doing right and answering his call. He's asking you not to just give him a prayer now and then but to give him your all. Soon you'll be out of here — by the time you read this, only about a month to go. So we're glad to see you remembering God's part and taking responsibility for your own. Sometimes we fear you fall back into your old mind set, where you count on God to have a gangsta's back, no matter how she act — but God gave you a second chance so you can do it different this time. So keep an open heart and a strong mind, 'cause your future freedom and life are both on the line. Pray like it all depends on God but act like it all depends on you — and we know you'll come through: happy, joyous and free. Make amends by never repeating those same mortal sins, 'cause God gave you a chance to begin again!

The Way Of Learning

We're born to live
We live to learn
We learn to know
The more we know,
The smarter we get,
And the smarter we get,
Our knowledge will grow
The more we grow
The wiser we get
As we get older
The wisdom we've earned,
We teach the newborns
The lessons we've learned.

-Breizy Bre, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Everything that you mention in your piece is true, but one thing we'd like to add is that it also makes a huge difference what kind of knowledge you're filling your head with. If you're learning positive things and hitting the books, that's great. However, if you're constantly filling your head with bad things, what's the benefit in that besides knowing what NOT to do? We hope you continue seeking knowledge because knowledge is power. We never stop learning, and once a person does, that person risks being behind others.

All Bad? — Can't Be!

Well, Beat, I'm quite sure everybody done been in a situation you thought was all bad, but after the fact, it benefited you in ways you never thought it would.

Really, I'm gonna keep it real, from the Hall to Camp, was something I thought I could and would never do, but man I'm still here watching and listening.

Overall, if you pay attention to what's going on and what's being said, it all sums up to be brain food — food for thought, or something to think about and consider.

So, to leave y'all on a good note: Just know that a lot of things we reject, are the things we need in order to grow.

-Kid, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Careful: Keep writing with such maturity and wisdom, and folks may stop calling you Kid and start calling you Da Man (in the good sense). What we're saying is that you got it right. But now, let's say someone tells you when you're falling from 10,000 feet to open your parachute — just to consider it as you continue to fall, would be a big mistake!

A Look Inside Me

if you look inside my eyes
you'll see tears from years of sorrow
if you look inside my soul
you'll see i'm not promised tomorrow
only thing i have to say
is tell the truth and never lie
i am looking for a life of love
for love will never die
when i look inside your eyes
i see someone who wants to cry
i am building a new character
so i won't be so shy
when i look into the future
i see there is no more hope
me myself what i must do
is find a way to cope

-Eugene, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are your own best hope, and what you write in this poem says so! Of course you want to cry, from all those years of sorrow you carry inside. But when you look for hope, look within, at your own desire to build yourself anew — for that is the best hope for you. And the practice of telling the truth, to yourself foremost, will itself be an act of love and humility. We can see you already have the seed of love within, now nurture it well and watch for it's blossoming.

All My Life

All my life I thought my life was crime
But then it couldn't be everybody else fault all the time
I never thought to blame myself
But when i got to thinking it wasn't everybody else
I reminisce on all the things I did
I started off hella young — 11 years old, I was still a kid
I thought my life was over, but I was still too young
I had wished I was dead, a bullet would piece my lung
Now I'm older and a little wiser in life
I got a lot to live for, I got a kid and a wife
Tell me, have you ever lived my life, spent one minute in my shoes?
If you haven't, tell me why you judge me as you do

-Pooh Bear U4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There are things we want to address in this very good poem. First, you have learned something very valuable, and it's a sign of your growing maturity. You've learned that things change — including the way you look at life. Lots of kids (and we use that word to mean they haven't matured) believe they will always think just as they do this minute. They don't know that every kid thinks that at some point. You probably thought it, too. But circumstances in your life have changed, and you have changed your thinking to reflect those new circumstances. That is what it means to grow up. No doubt, you will change again as you mature even more, as you experience new things, because change never stops. As for your final question, however, the system judges your acts because the law gives them the power to do so, and you also give them power by committing those acts. Do you make any judgments about adults in your life — for example, judgments about counselors, lawyers, POs or even Beat staff? Have you ever lived their lives or spent one minute in their shoes? It is natural for us to judge one another, even when we don't have much to go on. The trick is to be aware of our judgments — and to be open to the possibility that we are wrong, and that we can change.

From The Past To The Future

Well, today I'm going to talk about moving from the past to the future. I chose this topic today, because I have made a lot of mistakes that led me to a bad future that started my new year off really bad. One thing I do know is that I'm going to make sure I change my program around to where it will benefit me.

I just want to say the best thing about this year is that I'm going to get released sometime this year! I found out that all the dirt I did came back to haunt a ninja. I guess that's a life lesson that shows a person that you may think you got away with something, but it's just waiting to stab you in the back! Basically, it's a lifelong lesson, and it follows you for the rest of your life.

I just want to say to all of you first-timers coming to jail: It's built to keep you coming! You're the only person that can change it, 'cause you don't want to end up like me on your eighteenth birthday in Camp when you're supposed to be graduating from high school! Remember young'uns: Fast money don't last too long.

-Twan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's too bad some of us have such hard heads that we just don't get it till we mess up bad enough to feel some real pain. For hard heads it's really true: No pain, no gain. Well, it sounds like you've had enough of the former (pain), to decide it's time for the latter (gain — not in fast money but in wisdom today and happiness + freedom tomorrow). And thanks for urging the first-timers not to be so hard-headed, 'cause learning the hard way is not so fun in the end. Still, some never get it through their skulls — but you've learned that only when you change can the tables be turned.

I'm going to make sure I change my program around to where it will benefit me

Now I Know

What's up with it, Beat? It's your homie, "Baby G." Well, as for me, been here about four months now. I just got transferred to max. It's pretty cool over here. It's a more mature unit.

Well, I ain't stressin'. I know I'm going to Los Angeles. Yup, the good thing is the Group Home I might go to, they let you go to a public school, so that's cool.

I miss my baby a lot, but I can't let that affect me. I've been thinking a lot about stuff, mostly my life. I've been through a lot of shhhh.

I have nightmares sometimes, but the nightmare I have the most is of me dying. I see myself die. It's weird; sometimes I get shot, sometimes I get my throat slit.

I don't know what to do. I'm just going to sit here and wait till my Group Home release. What's the point in the stuff I do if it ain't gettin' me nowhere but locked up? I got to change. It's crucial at this point.

Al rato (I'll holla at y'all later) Beat.

-Baby G, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you have any idea what's triggering these nightmares? Fortunately, this is just a dream. If these nightmares are seriously troubling you, we suggest you seek professional help, or at least an adult whom you trust to talk to. Now that you know that the road you've been taking so far has only led you to a dead end, it's time for you to bust a U-turn. We hope you complete your program so you can move on and get started on repairing your life. Don't forget to keep us posted on your progress!

Camp Is Good, But Boring

Yo! What's good, Beat! This Grim from Hayward. Jus' wanna let you know that if you comin' to Camp, it's good here but boring. It's better than the Hall. We have more rec' and we get seconds on food.

They make it easy to run from here, but that's what they want you to do, so when you get caught it's longer time for you. Well, on my point — don't run! Jus' pimp this program out. You get to go home on weekends and stuff.

They do drug tests. So just drink now. But don't do that either, because they give alcohol tests now that work. They're getting smarter and smarter on tests now.

Well, if you come here, it's a lot better than the Hall. Well, all down there, be safe and take care. One love to all.

-Grim, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're doing a real service, lacing our readers up on what Camp is like. As for the boredom factor, we recommend you volunteer for everything you can: worker, sports, programs — everything they offer at Camp. The more you keep yourself busy, the less bored you get and the less likely you are to get into trouble, get write-ups, etc. Otherwise, you hit on all the important points in your piece.

Loneliness

Saludos (Greetings) Beat Within, how you been? Well, let me tell you about loneliness. That stuff gets to you. Man, when you are in your room thinkin' about the things you've done in the past and what's going on out there in your barrio ('hood) and loved ones forgot about you, that makes you feel like a loser, but crying don't help you. You can only do the time like a "G," you feel me?

But Lil' C sometimes feels like he should have been dead! But, I pray to the Lord for everything He has taught me! But you live another day, another dollar! Death before dishonor.

I'm going to end this fine letter with my love, respect, and loyal embracement.

-Lil' C., 150-Crew

From The Beat: To us, you sound confused. Lil' C, what Lord do you pray to? Jehovah? Jesus Christ? We're only asking you this question because if you truly pray to these figures, they don't approve of what you do. You pray for them to help you out, but what are you doing for them? Tell us: You wrote in your piece that you think about what's going out there in your barrio, but is your barrio thinking about you? Are they sending you letters or going to Juvy to visit you? Apparently not or else you wouldn't have written what you wrote. Maybe being locked up was a blessing from God. Maybe you got locked up so you could get your priorities straight. Maybe if you would have still been on the outs hanging out in your barrio, one of your rivals might have run up and taken you out the game? Believe or not, there are things worse than being locked up. We don't mean to sound so harsh, but we care about you and we don't want to see your face on the 10 O'Clock news because something bad happened to you.

A Walk Wit' Me

a walk through life is the ticket to death
i wondered if i could find myself
by walking through hell and through heaven
the clock was ticking, i'm way past seven
i thought i could follow my heart
but after so many years, it's been shattered apart
now my blood is dry and my lungs are cold
a walk with me, turned myself cold
now i'm on the way to a ride with me
i can't wait to see how that will be

-Dre, 150 Crew

From The Beat: To experience the temporarily delirious joy of rebirth, you must die to your narrow ego and disastrous past first. Such a death feels much like a curse or even worse, but there is an immortal part within continuing to thirst for love and hunger for life — not the immortal kind your spirit left behind to be born in the flesh, but living right, living strong, full of compassion for the rest, and for love's sake passing the test of a shattered heart to live long and do your earthly part. Bring a taste of heaven into this hell on earth, from the bottom-most pit of despair rise toward heaven's gate with your head in the clouds and your feet here on earth full of grace — born again to mercy, pity and peace, dying a thousand deaths within, a thousands times you can be born again without cease. Be part of the cure and not the disease.

Loneliness

I feel very lonely because I lived my life without my parent's. That's why I feel very lonely. I always had my aunty next to me but then I had to suffer a lot, so I think that I'm very lonely in my life. That's why I do what I do and that's why I keep coming up in here. So I won't feel lonely and I can spend time with all my friends up in here.

-Juanito, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Juanito, this is a very sad story that you tell us. To do things that will get you sent to jail just so you won't be lonely is a terrible situation to be in. Have you ever considered getting involved with something on the outs? Like sports or music or art? There are many organizations in your own community that can help you do this and give you something positive to focus on and that will allow you to be around people. When you spend time with people, you inevitable develop relationships - and this is what you need to do so badly. Don't go to jail to avoid loneliness. There are other ways to fill your life.

Cages Aren't For Humans

When I got arrested for the first time, man, I thought that it was the end of the world. It was all over for me when I snatched that old lady's purse and got caught. Police took my name down and took me down to the station, then to juvenile. Before I got to juvenile, my parents came down because they was worried and shocked.

We talked, and I ain't goin' lie, I was hella scared, 'cause when I was little, I heard so many horrible things about it, and I promised myself I would never go there. Look were I am today.

But while I was in here, it gave me time to think. You know, when you're on the outside, your head goin' crazy. Juvenile, prison, jail are all the same, but they are not for humans. Stuck in this box, cage, make your mind go even crazy.

-JP U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: When you say that being in here has given you time to think, what are some of the new things that you have been thinking about? We know that being in a cage can actually drive people crazy, so how do you think when you're feeling that? What are your plans for never putting yourself back in this cage again?

Left Or Right

when the time comes
will you go left or right
will you walk away
or will you fight
you get locked up
it's not a game you're playing
over and over
"shoulda woulda coulda"
you be saying
regrets they hurt
like a bullet in the brain
with a mind that speaks
louder than words
it'll make you insane
you go left for satan
for that little piece of cake
or right for god
for good choices to make

-Keith, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Forget the grieving over self-deceiving, or at least don't choose to make it stay a second longer than it takes to say, "Satan, I'm leaving." Beating yourself up too much, can make you feel like you're so worthless that it's useless to try, and rather than change you surrender to being a pig in a sty. That's the only insanity left to choose, 'cause what's over and done only exists as a bruise deep in your heart. So let the changes start as day by day, your heart heals and the pain begins to go away - but never to be forgotten. Time to start making amends to all you treated rotten, beginning with you. Now do your do.

Past

Yes, there has been a time when I felt everything was all bad and all the odds had piled up against me in this life of crime I've been living that's getting me nowhere but locked up, in and out the system's revolving door, by trying to always take the easy way out to get things done - like get money by stealing and selling drugs instead of going to school and getting an education to better myself in the future - only to find out that the path I took isn't the easier path!

Now I'm locked up with people telling me when to eat, sleep, shower, and go to school. Now I feel stupid because all the stuff I didn't want to do when I was free, like go to school, I have to do - and get told to do what I wish I had done in the first place so I wouldn't be locked up now. But it's my fault, and I got to deal with it and get through this, to continue and get my life back on track.

I did learn a lesson from all this though, and that's: Nothing is easy in life - nothing is given to you - you have to work hard for what you want.

-Deshun, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are way past the past in your thinking, even if you regret having to learn your lesson the hard way - still, you learned it, which is to say, as far as wisdom goes, you earned it. But maybe it's not wisdom yet, just knowledge. As they say, knowledge is power; but wisdom is putting your knowledge to work, using that power to better your life and the lives of others, especially the lives of those you love but also really everyone's. Even the thugs you leave behind on the grind if they choose can learn from you that it's not too late to change - and that chasing easy money does not lead to the easy life but eventually to hard time. Thank God you learned before that became a fact in your life. Now show us, the world and yourself that you are wise - work hard, do right, and rise!

Where Are My Wings?

where's my wings, i need them bad
i can't fly away, that makes me sad
it's taking my joy and so much more
i feel if as my back is sore
i tried to jump, and i could not fly
i'm an angel, i cannot die
but maybe god has forgot 'cause i'm still here
but i'm on earth, there's nothing to fear

-Dre, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your immortal soul, the spirit within, is indeed like an angel's descent to live here on earth wearing mortal flesh, to feel the pains and joys of life until death. After death, the immortal realm, your troubled spirit will calm, but to live and experience life is why your soul has come to earth: to rise above the pain and prove your worth - not measured in dollars and cents but having fallen again and again to reclaim your innocence; to find love in your heart and give it away; from the dark of error and despair, out of nowhere, to feel a spark of divine love and start a brand new day.

Baby

I don't have a have a dog story, but I got a cat story. Her name was Baby. When I was about seven or eight, I was playing with my cat outside, and my dad came and asked me, "Do you want to walk to the store with me?" I said, "Yup," so we were walking.

Then I saw my cat following us. I thought she would just stop when we got out of my little neighbor hood, but my cat followed me and my dad all the way to the store and waited in the bushes outside 'til we came out. Then she followed us all the way back. Baby was the best cat I ever had. We had grown up together.

One day she had got mad because we kept two of her kittens. She hissed and ran away. I haven't seen her since.

-Baby Gangsta, Marin

From The Beat: Damn, that's so sad your cat ran away after giving birth. Do you think Baby is still alive? Cats do live a long time. Well written story. Baby sounded like one special/smart cat.

Love Don't Cost A Thing

Love don't cost a thing
Love comes from your heart
Love goes through people and to people
Love can be given away
Love can be taken away
Love is something you get
From ordinary people

-Cherrio

From the Beat: What we like most about this piece, Cherrio, is that you have identified one of the greatest treasures known to human kind — and realize that it is there for all. As the Beatles once sang, "The love you take is equal to the love you make..."

Quote This

"You are not judge by what others do to you but now you react to problem, and if your mind is polluted, how would you know?"

Free Paco.

-Paco

From The Beat: As we discussed in the workshop, Paco, the strength of the Beat is in how you explain what you believe. We were impressed with the explanation for this piece which you gave in our discussion, but which you forgot to write down! Next time...

When Time's Up

I want society to know me as a firme gangsta, not just someone who was just putting it down, someone who actually put in blood, sweat, and tears. If I die a father. I want my children to take the good examples that I would've gave them. I wouldn't want to lead them towards the wrong path.

When people say, "That homie was firme, he had his stripes, put it down to the fullest and was always down for his raza and familia," I want to be known by generations after me that I actually cared for what went down in the 'hood and what positive things I made for the little homies. The little carnales should be no punks or suckas, and be organized for the better of themselves. That's the way it should be.

I love to hear carnales talk about right and wrong and to stay off them drugs because that's what's messing a lot of down-ass vatos that then later, they become dopeheads and don't even know what's cracking but crack and crys. I want to leave that positive note for when I pass on, homeboys actually say, "That homeboy was right."

Carnalismo is a big part to look out for one another. As birds' feathers flock together, that's the positive legacy. That's what I want for when I pass on to happen, and get your education a big part of life.

-Scarface

From The Beat: If you have children, and remain dedicated to being a "firme gangsta," you can never be a father. Don't get us wrong. You can sire children, as any male animal can. But being a father requires putting aside your own desires and focusing on what your child needs to be strong and free. You can't "give" your children good examples by lecturing them, beating them, or anything other than SHOWING them. That's what "example" means. Wanting to be known for the positive contributions you made to the children is very different from actually making those positive contributions. Are you doing what you say you want the next generation to do, or just telling them? Are you getting your education, or just saying it's what those little carnalitos should do? Children don't care about words, only about what they see around them. So understand clearly that by looking to be famous for the stripes you "earn" on the block, you are choosing yourself over any kids you might have, and that defines you as a child yourself. All we can hope is that if that time comes when you do make a child, that you have matured from that selfish and self-centered person into the kind of responsible adult it means to be a father. That is much harder than anything you've ever done or will do. We can see you're not up to that yet. We hope you will be. When you look back to those generations that came before you, whose fame has lingered into your generation? Whose names do you know who fit your definition of fame from those earlier generations? Where are their kids?

Never Too Late

Well, I just want you people to know that I'm locked up. When I was on the outs, I didn't care, but now from in here you start thinking differently. It makes you think about your family your friends, or some other stuff, personal stuff or some other things.

I just wish I didn't do what I did to be in here, locked up like a little bird locked up in a cage, and just thinking of all the good stuff that I was to do out there, wishing that I could go back in time and fix the bad stuff that I did.

My parents and my brothers and sisters tell me that I should calm down, and I will. But I think it's too late now, but I'm letting you know it's never too late

-Chucky

From the Beat: The only time it's too late, Chucky, is when you're six feet under. You are very much alive, and you can change your future. Use the past (which you cannot change) to remind you of where you want to go, and then make a real plan about how you want to get there. Getting your education is the key. Your life and your future is not in the hands of the probation department, the lawyers, or even the judges — your future is in your hands. Take hold of it and don't let it go!

Reminiscing

Sitting in my room reminiscing
having visions
missing drinking, smoking or just thizzing
homies on the block posting
like some killas
seeing people on the corner just drug dealing....

-Apache

From The Beat: Tell us, Apache, what is all this reminiscing about the "bad old times" doing for you? As long as your focus is on how much you miss all those things that lead you to hand up your freedom to strangers, you're just going to keep finding yourself reminiscing — from behind walls! When will you start looking forward, like a man, towards the kind of life that will keep you free and safe? We hope it happens soon.

I want to be known by generations
after me that I actually cared for
what went down in the 'hood and
what positive things I made for
the little homies.

At Times

At times in the back of my mind I think of
me and you holding hands
At times in the back of my mind I think of us
in the future together
At times in the back of my mind I say to
myself I don't deserve you and you deserve
better
At times in the back of my mind I think of
how I can make things better
At times in the back of my mind I think of us
being married
At times in the back of my mind I think back
to when we first said I love you
At that moment I knew we would be together
forever
Baby, you know I will always love you and
nobody can ever take that away
I love you, Babe, and always will

-Souksada

From The Beat: If you have someone this fine who loves you as much as you clearly love her, then you know what is important in your life — and what is not important! Act on what is important, and leave behind what is not. You're doing fine. Just keep it up!

Make A Better Tomorrow

Well, what I want all of you to know that life is not perfect for anyone. There are mistakes that we make and other stuff. You know your life might be perfect right now, but you don't know what might happen tomorrow. You might get into a car crash or something.

Well, my point is, you never know what will happen tomorrow, so, yes, try to make a better tomorrow. What I mean by making a better tomorrow is helping by not using drugs and driving, little stuff like that helps other people and it helps you.

I hope you listened because little discussion help other people in the world and your family, and 'specially you.

-Chucky

From The Beat: We appreciate the message you are delivering in this piece because we think it's everybody's responsibility to make a better world than the one we entered. On the other hand, we don't think that "not using drugs and driving" is little stuff. If someone you loved were hurt or killed in a car crash because the other drive was stoned, you wouldn't think it was little stuff, either.

Choices I Learned From

Life is easy. You make your own choices and you do what you want. That's what I thought until I made the wrong choices and hung with the wrong people. Sometimes you have to do wrong in order to learn the right. That's how I learned.

-Smokey

From The Beat: Yes, sometimes we do learn from our mistakes, which all of us make from time to time. If you've truly learned from yours, then your future is looking good! Don't forget these lessons. Don't disappoint yourself.

Changed Man

When I die, I don't wanna be recognized
Recognized as a drug dealer
Or a car stealer

I want people to realize

Realize that I've changed my ways

That when I was bad it was only a phase

I want them to know I'm a changed man

There's no need to treat me like I'm two,

No need to hold my hand

Because I'm a changed man.

-Souksada

From The Beat: What a great poem, Souksada! We love how you have repeated phrases that build toward the man you have become. But even a changed man sometimes needs a helping hand. We know we do. So if you see that hand reaching out to you, reach back and take it! Great poem! Thanks.

Putting It Down

What I want people to know when it's my time to go is that I was putting it down for my 'hood and all the time had all the homies' back.

-Savage

From The Beat: We know you won't appreciate what we're about to say, Savage, but the sad truth is that when you go, nobody in the 'hood will care for more than a minute. Soldiers take orders from others, whether those others are Presidents or gang shot-callers, and the job of the soldier is only to follow orders. Once the soldier is taken out by another soldier (in wars, there are always soldiers on both sides), those who give the orders simply cross you off their list and put another boy where you once stood — another boy who thinks he's putting it down for the 'hood, another boy that won't be remembered when he's gone either. We hope that one day you'll see that putting it down for yourself and your family (those who WILL remember you all their lives) is what's important, and that putting it down for the homies moves you nowhere but to places like this... or worse.

Changing For My Mom And Me

This is what I want to do when I get out of here. I want to go to high school and finish it. After that I want to go to college so I could get a good job. The job that I want to be is a manager of an airline because they pay a lot of money and I could help my family with whatever they need. Dat's why.

I am smart and I know how to be responsible, too. The reason I want to change is because I don't want to keep coming here, and so I don't make my mom suffer for all my choices, and I am. I should not be doing this to my mom because she is always nice to me, and the way I pay her back is not right. So that's why I want to change so she could see that I change on my own. Also so she could see I'm going in a good path, not ion a bad way.

-Jose

From The Beat: We are very proud of you for seeing how much you owe your mother, and what you plan to do to pay her back. This shows real maturity. She doesn't want your money. She doesn't want your presents. She wants you to succeed, to stay free, and to bring her the love of your own future family. You have seen that the key is getting your education, and by seeing that, you have already shown that you've thought about things in a mature and responsible way. We hope you show this wonderful piece to your mother, because it will make her very happy. But it will make her even more happy when you honor the promises you make in this piece. Thank you for sharing this.

National Auntie Day

I think my auntie should get a holiday because she gives so much. My auntie is not married nor does she have children, but she works 20 hours a day just to help me and my brothers and sisters. She would not talk about it because she does not do it in favor. She does it out of love.

I love my aunt and I know there is a lot of aunts like this. I think there should be a national aunt day.

-Biggs

From The Beat: We love this piece, Biggz. The thing we love most about it is that you not only recognize the sacrifice your auntie makes for you and your siblings, you also understand that there are many aunts in many places making many sacrifices. So, you have convinced us. We agree, there should be a National Auntie Day.

The People Of Today

I write this poetry of remorse
Because as days go by our lives change
course
One day we could be alive and well
The next day we could be locked in a cell
I speak to the kids of today, that we should
change the way we live
So that in the future we'll have something
to give.

-Souksada

From The Beat: This is wonderful advice, Souksada. But one thing we've learned is that words of advice do not change a child's behavior. It's what the child sees that he or she models. So, live you life the way you'd like these kids (maybe in your own family) to live theirs. When they see you living right, they will follow.

When I Go

When I go what I want people to know is dat I put it down for my 'hood. I put it down for my 'hood I until I die. So for all the haters forget them.

-Big D

From The Beat: Until you mature, there's not much point in our pointing out to you that all those others who "put it down for the 'hood" and are no longer on this earth will be forgotten tomorrow, replaced by others just like you who are willing to sacrifice their own mother's love for a bunch of boys! We don't know when that time will come, but we hope it comes before you make one mistake too many. (Check out our Beat response to the same kind of message that Savage wrote in this same issue.)

No Freedom

I think most people hate it here because there is no females here to talk to. Another reason is because we are away from our family and friends. The reason why I hate it here is because there is no freedom.

One of the things I'm going to do to stay out of here is go to school and try to stay off the block. I'ma try to stay focused on my work, but coming where I'm from, everyone is getting money and it's hard to say no to all the cash being made.

-Denmark

From The Beat: All that cash being made is gone in a flash when they lock you up! The real money is going into the pockets of those who run corrections departments, from state prisons to county juvenile halls. Do you know how much it cost to build this new hall? Where do you think the money comes from? We definitely admire your decision to go to school and stay out of here, because we think that is the ticket to a better future. But we worry (just like you do), that the temptations for that quick cash will overwhelm your own good sense. Sometimes, the hardest thing in the world is to say no to something you want today because you want something more valuable tomorrow. We hope you have the strength it will take when that time comes.

Confused Thinking

Why you muggin'?
Why yo 'fake ass think you thuggin'?
You got into it wit' them down the street.
Now you hella scared,
walking around with a vest under yo' white T.
You been on the block for fifteen years,
and still ain't seen no real money,
but you never thought you'll be doing fifteen to life.
Now you in prison only thinking 'bout protectin' yo' cheeks
while Earl in bed fast asleep, with your girl under the sheets.
Now that's just confused thinking.

-Twin

From The Beat: We don't think there's much confusion in this thinking at all, Twin. We think you're thinking clearly. Thinking is the beginning of wisdom — but only the beginning. Once you start thinking, there's no telling where it will end? In fact, once you start thinking, it won't end. So let your thoughts carry you beyond what you call "confused" into a brighter place.

Today

Today I woke up and I realized it wasn't no lie.
I am locked up.
They say freedom is for those who deserve it.
I guess I don't, so I won't.
But take a minute and look into my eyes. I don't tell no lies.
Can you see the pain? It's got me going insane
like the blood running through my veins.
It's the pride that keeps me in this game.

-Smiley

From The Beat: You have some clever rhymes, Smiley, but when you put it altogether, what have you got? It sounds like a promise to keep doing what you've been doing. We don't understand what there is to be proud of when you've handed away the one thing that matters, your freedom, to a cold and uncaring system. The most promising words in this poem are the first four you wrote: "Today I woke up..." The day you see that pride comes from something other than a "game" someone else invented and you merely accepted as a follower, that's the day you will wake up! Until then, you're still sleeping...

A Day To Observe

I think my mom should be honored because when I'm always in trouble she's always there for me. When I need her she's there. She works hard to put food on the table and pay bills.

My mom and my little sisters are the most important women in my life. My mom was also a gang member and she did decide to change her life for me and my sisters. That is why I choose her for a National Holiday. My mom.

-Carlos

From The Beat: We think your mom should be honored, too, Carlos. So why don't you honor her by making sure she doesn't have to shed any more tears for having her son doing things that take him away from her? Telling your mom how much you love her is very important. But showing her how much you love her by making some sacrifices is far more important. She has given up so much that she wanted to do because you came first in her life. She put herself second. Now, it's time for you to start returning those sacrifices. Stop doing what you like to do so much, but which hurts the person who's been there for you from the beginning, and will be there for you till the end. That's the way to show your love for her.

Thinking Back

At times I'm often reminiscing
Reminiscing of the times I'm missing
Missing times me and you would be together
Thinking back of the times I thought we would never ever
And now it turns out that I'm locked up in a cell
Thinking of those times makes this place feel like hell
Now I'm telling everybody I'm sorry
And that there's no need to worry
I'll be okay I'll say
Don't worry, I'll get out one day
But unfortunately that one day isn't now
So I tell my little brother keep your chin up and stand proud.

-Souksada

From The Beat: Thinking back with some regret/helps us see that we owe debts/ Once a mind begins to grow/there's no limit to where you'll go/We have few worries about you... /if only you will follow through.

El Nuevo

Que ondas homies? Pues ahorita no tengo nada que hablar, porque no tengo nada de hablar sobre los temas. Pero si quiero hablar sobre un nuevo paisa que acaba de llegar aqui al Rancho. Es tan feo que hasta los animales les tienen miedo. Aqui les dibujo una foto para que lo vean.

From The Beat: *Ahora dicen las mujeres que el hombre entre más horroso sea, es más hermoso. ¿Que dices tú de esos? La belleza uno la trae adentro del ser. Lo físico es lo de menos. Liebate eso en mente. ¿Y tú te has visto en un espejo? ¿Eres bello? ¿Tienes defecto? Aunque tú no lo creas, todos tenemos defecto. Nadie hay un perfecto en esta vida.*

The New

What's up, homies? Well, right now, I don't have anything to talk about because I don't have anything to say in regards to the topics, but I do want to talk about a new Latino who just arrived here at the Ranch. He is so ugly that even the animals are scared of him. I'm drawing y'all a picture so y'all can see.

-Cruz, LCRS
From The Beat: *Now, women say that the uglier the man is, the more handsome he is. What do you have to say to these women that think like this? The beauty is found on the inside. The physical aspect is worthless. Keep that in mind. And you: have you seen yourself in the mirror? Are you beautiful? Do you have any defects? Although you may not believe it, we all have defects. Nobody is perfect in this life.*

La Comida Que Me Hace Feliz

Para mí la comida que me hace feliz es la comida Hondureña.

From The Beat: *¿Que hay de especial en la comida Hondureña? Tienes que darnos la mayor detayes de las cosas para que podamos saber. ESCRIBA MAS.*

The Food That Makes Me Happy

For me, the food that makes me happy is Hondurean food.

-Jose Manuel B2
From The Beat: *What's so special about Hondurean food? You have to give us the main details about things so we can know. WRITE MORE.*

La Comida Que Me Hace Feliz

La comida que me hace feliz es las pupusas de Honduras.

From The Beat: *¿Que tienen esas pupusas que las hacen ser tus favoritas?*

The Food That Makes Me Happy

The food that makes me happy are pupusas from Honduras.

-Denis B2
From The Beat: *What do those pupusas have that make them your favorite?*

ALAMEDA COUNTY

Be Loyal

When I'm lonely I ride around the town, smoking hella blunts. I'm probably holla at a few girls and get they number to see what's really good – but I got to call wifey first cause she come first you feel me. If you don't know it you do. Anyway. probably go to her house to see what it's really looking like.

But my habit I need to break is to stop messing around on my girl and start to be loyal and my smoking habit I need to break so for all my BG out there need to be easy I'm gon' holla at y'all next week.

-Lil' Rome
From The Beat: *When you cheat on your girl (the true girl, the one you love and depend on, you're actually cheating on yourself, because when we hurt people we're connected to, that pain gets us too. The worst is the lying, that's what hurts the most. What about either a. deciding to stay faithful or b. if you believe you're too young to settle down (which is legit, you are young after all) just being honest with her about it? As for smoking – you know how we feel about that but we're not here to preach. The question here is why do you want to quit? What are you losing, by smoking? What is it costing you?*

Friends

my friends are the best
people i could have
they help me through
thick and spands
meaning bad and good times
my friends are the people
i can talk to
those people are
my grandma, dad
sisters, brothers, etc.
man, my friends
you can trust them
not to break any of your secrets
i love them
see ya later alligator

-Snow Bunny Melondy
From The Beat: *Trust is essential to friendship, and keeping secrets earns trust. But helping you solve your problems in a positive fashion and helping you learn how to live a life that will keep you out of the system and free — that's deep friendship, too.*

I'm It

I'm too much fo' these ninjas
'cause i'm hella hyfee
with my
black tee and my clear black nikes
when i push through
i never would stunt on the folks
slow down and let
the lil' ninjas count my spokes
i pull them twenty-fo's out in the summer
and put that dro in my chest ridin' a hummer
here's where they took out
some of my words
'cause i'm always throwin' up my turf
but wherever you from i'm it
the best it get
on citas ninjas i'm it

-Turquoise
From The Beat: *Sorry we had to take some words out — no turf calls in The Beat — and changed a few others, like your title — we don't floss guns or explicit sex. Oh well, we tried our best to keep the spirit of the rest.*

Lonely Without My Wife

Lonely because I ain't with you
Lonely because I ain't around you
Lonely because I can't spend time with you Kayla
And we can't go playsit

I wanted to go with my lady because I miss her
I am lonely because I am ain't with my wife and when I am with my wife I'm not lonely because I end for special play with her my wife Kayla.

-Dadaby
From The Beat: *We hope you are reunited with her soon. The memories of your time together will get you through your days and nights in the hall.*

Looking Back At Past Experience

One past experience was when I came here this time for messin' with one of my supposed to be patnas who I thought was solid. Then, I found out that they was snitchin'. Even though I came to jail, I learned to mess with family only. Sometimes you think someone is something that they're not, so now I know to watch everybody that I be around more closely.

-Ray-Ray
From The Beat: *Unfortunately, this is a lesson you had to learn the hard way. However, when you're involved in shady activities, you're going to come across people that are equally shady. In the end, 99% of people are going to look out for their own best interest. Anyone who says otherwise is straight up misguided. Regardless of how closely you watch people now, the easiest way to avoid situations like this is simple: Stop doing things that can lead you to places like this!*

Sometimes you think someone is something that they're not, so now I know to watch everybody that I be around more closely.

What's Up With That?

Damn, I am back in jail and I hate this place and I thought I was never comin' back. Well, I'm waitin' on my Camp release and this time, I'm gone complete my program because last time I was here two years ago when I ran from ROP, but I'll be out in a few weeks and I thought I had two more years left in me, but I got snatched up. Least I know I'm still gone be living.

-Lil' Deadaman
From The Beat: *Well, what happened? Are you going to get out, get locked up again, and find yourself saying the same thing? We know being locked up right now must have you feeling like kicking yourself, but you don't have anyone else to point the finger at but yourself. We hope you walk the walk. "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me."*

Happy Food

My favorite happy food is McD's because it tastes hella good. It helps me calm down. It tastes good when I'm hungry and got the munchies.

-Blame

From The Beat: It's called a Happy Meal for a reason!

Reminiscing

Que onda! Loneliness is a good thing because you have time to reminisce on your life! You start to think whether you're doing something with your life! Or do you even care? You have to think about the way your life is going or the people you affected. Alratros!

-Lil' Mousie

From The Beat: Tell us more about who you have affected and what you want to do with your life. The Beat wants to hear all about it.

Going to LA

Que Onda to all locked down in the hall! Stay safe, stay solid, stand tall through it all!

Well as for me I just got word that I can't go to any local group homes so my P-O told me my choices are somewhere by Mexico, and L-A, ROP in Nevada, and Visalia! I picked LA for sure! Because it's the closest!

Well I also heard my co-partner just got released! And he went to a local group home (an easy one at that!) and he's been to like nine groupers!

Well to all stay solid this vato is out.

-Lil' Mousie

From The Beat: Good luck in Los Angeles. There's plenty of trouble in that town and we hope you stay out of it. Leave the repping and focus on you. Best of luck!

Locked Up

Every time I go to my room I think really hard, I stop for a minute, then I read my book till it's time for me to go to rec. Then we take showers. Then we go to rec again. When I eat the food I remember my moms cooking and it makes me think like man.

-Juan

From The Beat: Sounds like a tedious routine. Let's hope you get out soon so you can enjoy your mom's cooking and do something more interesting than shower, roomtime, rec, shower, roomtime, rec. Remember how boring that routine is next time you're on the outs and about to make a wrong decision.

Lonely

I'm lonely in these hall
Lookin' at these walls.
Missing your face.
Moppin' around.

We're in someone else's underwear

Baby I'm missing you, and I want to hear from you.
I bet you don't want to talk to me 'cause I am locked up
but I just want you to know that I love you,
that I am going to play the real game and leave the wrong game
I am going to stay faithful to you and be a man this time.

-D'Marcus

From The Beat: Well, we hope it is not too late to get back with the one you love, if it is, you then need to take a good look at yourself and begin to make wiser choices with your life. Best to you! What's your plan to be successful and free?

Need To Break The Bad Habit

What's up Beat? Just want to drop a lil' somethin' down here. For y'all who still want to do crime: Well, the system is not playing no more. I've been coming to the hall since I was 12 years old and now I'm 16. Been here about seven times and am tired of this place.

This time I came back for a new charge and they threw me a strike.

I'm just trying to let y'all know: y'all need to break them bad habits. Them bad habits is not going to take y'all nowhere. But it's time for me to go I'm out.

-Cash Money

From The Beat: True words. Thanks for sharing your honest wisdom with The Beat. So what should one do to not come back? What are you going to do?

Habits

The habits I need to change are to stop getting myself in trouble. Just think before I do somethin' and see if I do this what will happen.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Most people don't stop to think before they act or even speak. So you're not alone young friend. But just taking the time to reflect on the fact that you'd like to be more careful about the choices you make puts you five steps ahead of most people you know. Let us know what happens with your experiment.

Focus

A habit that gives me a lot of trouble is losing focus. It's happened a lot, not because I can't help it but because I don't want to focus on things like school, etc. but time in here has broken that habit so to all you guys and girls stay focused because it's yo life. Thank about that for now.

-Mando

From The Beat: Good advice. We all lose focus sometimes and need help from friends to get back.

Came Back

What's up! This is Jillian from Hayward. I left on the twentieth of December and came back on the twenty-sixth! Basically, I left for X-mas and came back for New Year's!

It's now January sixteenth, and I just got interviewed from some place in San Jose. I came back to the Hall 'cause I ran from rehab in Redwood City wit' my homeboy. I think I'm gonna run again, but the people ain't gonna get me anywhere close to San Jose.

I know I should just do my time, but I wanna see my nephew — and the homeboy I ran wit', doesn't know I'm locked up.

-Chilli

From The Beat: What's the point of seeing your nephew or your homeboy just to get caught up sooner or later and being separated again, maybe for even longer — maybe even at the Y if the judge decides it's the only place you can't run from! No, seeing your nephew and your homeboy are reasons not to run, 'cause you don't want to see them and lose them again. You want to see them and stay seeing them. So complete your program.

The Hanging Out Habit

Well a habit I need to break is hanging out because it's not helping my life because I keep coming back to the hall. And every time I come back here it worries my mom.

-Lawrence

From The Beat: Good for you for being honest with yourself about what needs to change. That's the hardest part! And, what's the plan to break this habit?

Bad Smoking Habit

A habit I got is smoking grapes. If I wasn't on probation it wouldn't really be a problem because everybody smokes weed. But since I'm on probation my P-O keeps violating me. So this time when I get out I'm not gonna smoke 'till I'm out the system.

-Chip

From The Beat: That's a good plan. But even though everyone around you smokes, not EVERYONE smokes. There are plenty of happy people who don't smoke weed every day, and you can be one of them. Get your life together!

Were The Cash

Don't be surprised if she ask were the cash at...
See now I am gone put these on you.

I eat big every night I don't never and I mean never eat this county food.

Still got money, I am still on. I am that ninja.
When you see me in the hallways talk to me I talk back.

I am in the room all night on the cell phone....
My patna said he want my grill. I told him go ahead... ha, ha, ha

-That Ninja

From The Beat: You might not be eating county food and you might be on your cell phone all night — but have a look at where you're sitting — IT'S A JAIL CELL!!! No matter which way you turn it, you're still locked up. And if you don't get wise to that, you'll just be "that ninja" locked up for a very long time. We wonder if you really think you are having the last laugh? Think again!

Halls

Tired of this same walls and same view
Tired of the same thing everyday to do

I'm tired of all this, no lie, it's true

When I get out first thing, I'm gonna sip the brew
Purple liquid and alcohol

Out the system fast so its time to ball

Can't get caught up by the damn P-O

Even if I did choose to take the blow

Love the flow 'cause I love the cheese

Cookie dough take care of all my needs

Put it in the oven cookin' for a minute

Let it take form, put some cold water in it

That's the recipe for me that be winnin'

All my cash flow stopped try'na defend it

That's why I gotta case

Tell the damn OPD to get up out my face

Wanna search me, guess I gotta run

Duck a corner fast then I toss the gun

Runnin too long, losin' breath from my lungs

So I stop, then I got tazered

Pay attention after my high come down later

Bet a wager, let me get out

And all my will, here again what I'm talkin about

Once again, see me back

Back on the block makin hella racks

-Angel

From The Beat: Angel! You have rhyming skills! We didn't realize. We know you also have thinking and talking skills. So why you keep doing the same damn thing? When are you gonna wise up and stop being a wise ass? You gonna waste all those brain cells on drugs? You gonna waste all your young years in and out of jail. Maybe you're not ready to leave the party lifestyle. Fine, but aren't you smart enough to do what you need to do to get ahead at the same time? How about college? That's what you should be planning for right now. Not getting back on the street to make hella racks and then in due time find yourself incarcerated fighting another case.



What Is Your Happy Food?

My happy food is menudo because it makes me feel good when I'm drunk. It takes the hangover away in a short time. So that's why it's my favorite food. But I have another favorite food, it's steak tacos and the reason I pick it was because it leaves a good taste in my mouth. So that's why it's my happy food.

-Juanito

From The Beat: Menudo must be full of vitamins and nutrients, which is why it helps you get over a hangover. You should also eat it when you're sick.

Something Wrong

I look back at the past, and I see I did something wrong. That's why I'm here, so I know not to do the same thing I did to get back here.

You got to change your past and how you was, to get to new things. If you do the same stuff, you will get the same stuff — that's why you got to change it up sometimes.

I would like to change a lot about my past, just to make now better. But you learn sometimes, to it won't turn out bad.

-Young Life Dre

From The Beat: You can't change what happened in the past, but you can change what it means to you — you can change your attitude toward what you did in the past, hook it up to the negative consequences you don't want to experience again and learn from your mistakes. But it's not a question of getting more slick but of committing to do right and making it stick.

Loneliness

Sometimes when I lie on my bed here at Camp and "talkin' is dead", I feel lonely, especially when there's no homies in my wing.

I feel lonely without my wife. She keeps me busy. I don't feel lonely when I'm with her. Basically, when I'm by myself, I'm lonely. Man, this topic is stupid! I'm out.

-Soldier

From The Beat: Yeah, it's kind of a downer, and you don't need any more of that while you're trying to finish out your time at Camp. On the other hand, maybe you feel uncomfortable when you're alone because you have time to think — and you don't want to think. It seems to us, you've become increasingly stir crazy every week. We know this place gets old, but we worry that when you're released you just might explode. Tell us your plans again for when you're released, which isn't far off now!

Learn From Past Experience

Like a couple years ago before everybody started dying in my life, I started witnessing people getting shot, shot at like everybody.

I was thinking that I was going to die but as the story gets on all the people I knew started dying. So I started stickin' with girls and staying in the house, but then one of my closest friends died and that really hurt me. Now I don't give a shhh. I'm on the street 24/7 busting everything that moves so for them dudes that don't want to die, stay in the house or run when you see me!

-Lil' Sheiking

From The Beat: It almost makes us feel like after your close friend died, you just gave up hope on protecting your own life and future, and just gave in to anger and revenge. We can see how that would happen after a second loss... your friend lost a battle between the forces of life and the forces of death, so you already now know how much the destruction of the death force can bring pain: to friends, to mothers, and to the person whose future is stolen from them. Don't add to that, don't become a part of that culture of death! Instead, become part of the culture of life. You deserve it. And the memory of your friend deserves it. Your family deserves it. The community deserves it. What would it look like, if you decided to choose life?

In the Outs

I miss being in the outs, just messing with the females and smoking with the homies. Not only that, but just being free, not having to follow rules like when to eat and what to eat.

Man, I just can't wait to finish this program and go out there so I can get me a job and buy me a clean car!

-Spider

From The Beat: Props on your plan to get a job. Is there one waiting for you? If not, where do you plan to look for what kind of work? (Fail to plan and plan to fail.) You'll find that on the job, there will be rules to follow as well. Go back to just kicking it and smoking shhh, and you'll find yourself caught up again

As Days Pass

Q-Vo Beat? This the homeboy Dreamer from Hayward comin' at you one more day at Camp. First, I want to send my respect to all doin' time, 'cause that ain't no small thang if you got a big case! I want to give my love to Mike Jonez: Stay up, homie!

But, yeah, I really don't have that much to say today. I kinda screwed up shop — this weekend on my HV I missed my call. But it was worth it, just chillin' wit' the homies and my lil' rucha, and smashin' up and down the strip up in San Jose.

I got court in like three weeks. I hope I get out, so I can handle my bizz on the outs — and help out my moms 'cause she's going through it right now. But to anyone 'bout to come to Camp: Don't trip, 'cause this is a easy program. So just pimp it and get your HV's! It ain't that much time. Six months is only some change.

I ain't got nothin' else to say. Keep your head up and stay solid. Alrato.

-Dreamer

From The Beat: Just remember that if you're making money on the grind to give to your mother, it will look like you're helping her through a hard time, but in reality you're just setting her up for more pain — 'cause following that path you'll be back in lock up again. The banging life is a curse, but it's even worse if it's your only source of income, 'cause you're likely to lose all self-discipline and go back to that crazy life that will cut your freedom short like a sharp knife.

I Am Back

Lil' Rio be back. I was MIA (missing in action) for a minute, but not forgotten. I know what I'm talkin' 'bout! I came to jail and found out my BM (baby's momma) in here! And I haven't seen her in, like, eight months!

But anyways, you beezies who don't know who my BM is, she'll tell you if she want you to know. And I wish a ninja would touch my BM, 'cause I'm looking for an excuse to smash, on the real.

-Lil' Rio

From The Beat: Threatening to hurt someone just reinforces the notion that it's the best way to show how you feel — even while you're saying you want your BM to be living in peace and harmony while she's incarcerated. Threats create way more violence than they prevent! Anyway, judging from both the tone and content of this piece, you need to slow your role 'cause you're rolling out of control.

Bad Smoke Habit

I think the baddest habit I got is smoking cigarettes because I can survive longer on the streets than smoking cigarettes every day, because I'm killing myself every time I smoke.

-Lil Dame

From The Beat: Well, in a way, cigarettes might kill you slowly, but taking chances out on the streets could kill you quickly too: in the flash of a gun trigger to be exact. So we hope you break both those habits!

Hey All!

I want to make a shout out to all at camp. I hope that all of ya'll are doing what you do up there. And I hope that you guys are pimpin' that because it's so easy up there and it's a great opportunity to go home. So I hope that you guys finish it ok.

-Juanito

From The Beat: We're glad you want the campers to do their program and get out. And we know that the word pimpin is used to mean "do well." But we want you to think about that word for a minute and what it really means: to sell women for money. Would you want a woman that you love, like your auntie, to get pimped? Remember to always respect women. They are your/our mothers, your sisters and your daughters. Without them you cannot be whole. Do more in life than just pimp this or pimp that!

To My Uso's (Samoans) Doing Time

This is dedicated to my Uso's incarcerated that never made it: Doing life behind bars and try to survive on a Level-four prison yard. Keep ya' head up and maintain 'cause I feel yo' pain. Things is gonna get better. I know it's hard waking up every morning trying to face the fact that you will never be free again. Just hold on and stay strong.

-Cl

From The Beat: We know that your fellow usos will appreciate your words of encouragement. We also hope you follow your own words of advice and maintain your head up. No matter how bad today might feel, with tomorrow comes the promise of a better day.

Loneliness

I am a very lonely dude when I get locked up. So much be going on around me. Too many J-Cats just make me go crazy.

-Ch

From The Beat: If you feel this way when you're locked up, then stop getting yourself locked up so you won't have to feel this way! Do you think you can stop getting yourself locked up? Maintain your cool and ignore the immaturity in your max unit. In truth we have never seen a more immature max unit as a whole. No disrespect to those doing a good program. Just do your time so you can get out and never have to deal with the likes of the system ever again.

I'm Good

i'm tired of bein' in the hall
so i'm good
i'm tired of bein' where my ninja can't call
so i'm good
i can't take not bein' in the 'hood
so i'm good
i'm tired of not bein' onnn ... like i should
so i'm good
i'm tired of people tellin' me what to do
so i'm good
i'm tired of puttin' my foot in other people's shoes
so i'm good
i'm tired of bein' here so i act stuck up
so i'm good
so i'm sittin' askin' god to help me keep my head
up
so i'm good
i'm tired of this, been in here for awhile
so i'm good
'cause i'm not going through this no more
this ain't my style
so i'm good

-Jamikka

From The Beat: A good program will get you out of here and back on the outs, but if you stop doing good after your release or your placement, there's little doubt you'll be back. So, since you don't want to see that — keep up the good act. Once it's a habit, you'll have it! But when you say you missing being "onnn" — we hope you don't mean you plan to return to dropping ecstasy, 'cause how you gonna keep it cool when your brain think like a fool.

The Real Habit

My last past experience was being in my friend's van and we were being shot at from the back and thank God nobody got hit.

The habit I need to break is coming to jail. I don't think it's a habit but I just come here too much. It looks like a habit but the real habit I really need to break is smoking, and I don't know how I'm gon' break that because I stay high.

-Guy

From The Beat: The first thing we can see from this piece is that you're not afraid to dig deep. Instead of settling for the obvious answer "habit of going to jail" you step up once more and look at the weed. So our first question on this is DO YOU feel like you want to quit getting high? Because the only way to break a bad habit is to realize like that is to really want to, deep down. Do you want that better life for yourself that you could have if you quit getting high?

Mexican Food..

... always makes me feel better. Quesadillas mainly is what be tasting really good, when I have the munchies it's the best time to eat them.

-Jesus

From The Beat: Reading this made us wish we had a quesadilla right now. Can you cook too, or do you usually get them somewhere else?

Loneliness

When I'm feeling lonely and stressing out, I just lay on my bed and read a book and daydream about what I could have been doing if I was not in jail right now.

-Lil' Man Man

From The Beat: What kind of books do you read? What are your interests? Good for you. What would you be doing if you were not in jail looking at years? We hope you keep this feeling in the back of your mind so whenever you're back on the outs and are thinking about acting out or doing something foolish, you remember how it felt when you had your freedom taken from you, and you don't follow through with your intentions. You're too smart o a young man. We wish you a productive safe journey and that you stay posted with The Beat Within!

All Bad- No Luck

One night everything going good then the next minute police hit the block and everything just start going wrong it was a perfect night then I start going back and kicking the door so they put me in something were I couldn't kick the door.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: We're not sure what you are saying here, you were having a perfect night breaking the law, and before you new it you were incarcerated kicking the door? No? Yes? We suggest you stay away from the block.

Two Bad Habits

My bad habit is disrespecting my parents.

I really wish I had another chance to really talk to my mom and dad again. I just want everything my way and I feel like I don't have to apologize to nobody because I'm just like that.

Another habit I have is hangin' on the block. As much as my parents tell me to get off the corner I just don't listen and get caught back over there. I really think if my girlfriend lived in Oakland then maybe it would be different, but I'm glad she don't because she won't become one of these girls that almost every dude in Oakland.

But even though she don't live out here, I here I get lonely when she's not here. I love going to her house outside Oakland because her house is big and we have fun together. I really miss her, can't wait to see her again.

-Kev Bee

From The Beat: It sounds like you have all the best reasons for breaking these habits: Two parents who care about you, a girl that has a positive impact on you, and that you really care for. Do you think this will help you change your bad habits?

What's Good

Hell yeah, I stay grinding
I act greedy with the money
I don't care

The way that I shine
You think I was a millionaire
Putting dub's on the whip
Spending racks on the chain
In case you ain't knowing
Ain't gotta ask if I'm strapped

'Cause I just might be

White Tee keep a thug feeling clean
So fly, the chicks say I should have wings
Thizz thug life got ya boy feeling like new money
Trigga man make it snow in the summer time

My b-m hate guns,

But she know that I'm in love with mine's

It gotta be like that

Off top, I'm gonna be like that

And you think you doing something

'Cause you spent a week in Cancun

I took a trip outta town with hella balloons
And made a profit
Sat home and watched the Warriors play the Rockets

Understand?

You lil' suckas bootsy

Get yo' act right

Get yo' doo up.

-Young Clyde

From The Beat: What movie was this? "Paid In Full?" If you truly did make this much money, which we cut out, then how come you're locked up? Did you spend it all on white Tee's? We omitted a lot of your piece. You're lucky we're even printing this much. However, you mentioned something in your piece that we'd like to discuss with you. Why do you think your B.M. doesn't like guns? We agree with her because we don't like guns either. Have you ever heard the saying: "You live by the gun, you die by the gun?" Has anyone close to you ever lost his/her life because they got shot? You think you sound cool, but sorry to break this to you, you sound more like a fool. We want all of you to contribute to The Beat, but don't give us no B.S. If you don't have anything good to share, then don't write for us. We rather use the space your B.S. takes up on someone with something good to say. Our suggestion, read the back of this Beat aka The BWO.

Missing My Girl

What's up Beat this is Sam, talkin' about my girl. I am missing my girl because she was always there for me. She made me happy, whenever I was down.

She was always there for me. We are hella happy together. 'Cause we always had good times together. Her name is Joanna and I am waitin' till I get out so I can see her again. 'Cause she lives at my house and she is waitin' for me to get released. So we can be together again. Well I got to go so trucha homies that are locked up in the streets. And baby, I am coming home soon. I love you Joanna with all my heart. It will be me and you for ever.

-Samuel

From The Beat: Love, romance, the trust and respect of a girl, these are all things that can help you get your life back straight - but there's more to it than that, right? Otherwise you wouldn't be here in the first place. So tell us more - about what kinds of struggles you faced on the outs. What got you on the path to jail-time in the first place? And what are you going to do differently this time, so that once you are released, you and your girl can have the life you wish for: You and her forever.

Tryin' To Make It

Livin' life every day,
Tryin' to make it through the phase
With the crime on my mind
Making money every way
Being stuck behind in jail
Like burnin' down in hell,
Choose the bad over right
Now you're sweatin' in a cell

-James

From The Beat: Even when you're in jail stressin'/you write a rhyme that can teach us a lesson/that's the skill of a true poet/ follow it yourself, now that you know it!

When I'm in My Room

Beat, it's been a while since I wrote for The Beat but today I'm out of my room.

Well what's up Beat readers? Today's topic is about loneliness. I've been here for several months, so yeah I'm feelin' kinda lonely. Every time I'm in my room, I think about all those beautiful days I used to be with my girl, sitting and talkin'.

I also miss those days I was with my family but most of all the reason I feel lonely is because my big brother Jupiter isn't there to support me.

-Curioso

From The Beat: Well, you know what we're going to say: it's our biggest fear, given some of the stuff you've said about gang loyalty in the past... we're afraid that "loyalty" might keep you away from your family, your girl, your future, all the great things you could be. We know you're working on an answer for this for The Beat, and we're looking forward to hearing your thoughts. Peace and respect, always.

Loneliness

Loneliness is when I'm behind those four walls. I feel lonely because I can't do what I want to, like I can't be with no females, I can't get no money, I can't talk on the phone.

And I stay on the phone! Everybody know that is me! After I get off with one female, I call the next one. See? Everybody know me for having a mouthpiece: if I want you, I'm gon' get — if I want something from you, I'm going to get it.

See, I had a girl and she called me "Mouthpiece" because I went from her potna to her. I do that because females come a dime a dozen.

-Lil' Beazol

From The Beat: We'd have to say those last words you wrote are about the ugliest in the English language. We'd say that you don't feel enough self-confidence alone anywhere, and to bolster your self-esteem you have to feel like you're getting over on some girl. But that doesn't cheapen girls, it cheapens you. In the end, who would give a dime a for your words when they're nothing but lies and manipulation. But you're not feeling us because you don't see how it's you, yourself, you've been cheating — 'cause even if it was true love you were meeting, you'd trash it with your deceiving and have it leaving fast. When it comes to love, it's quality not quantity. Love is priceless and talk is cheap. In the end, "getting over" is a loser's game, but it's never too late for you too change!

the real habit I really need to
break is smoking,
and I don't know how

Alcoholic And Sad

I need to break my drinking habit, because I know that drank ain't good for you. But I'm a alcoholic, I can't stop. If y'all know Lil' Dave you know how I be off that shhh every day I can't stop so screw it, I'm goin' to drank till I die.

-David

From The Beat: Well, we could crack a joke here, about how the more you drink the sooner you'll die, but that would be sort of disrespectful, because the real emotion that this makes us is sad. Like, sure, in the beginning drinking feels fun. If you're shy, it helps you relax, and party, and there's always a bottle floating around when you're out with your crew, and if there's something painful in your life it hides them (temporarily). The next time they come back twice as strong). But it's a poison and it makes you do stupid things, and frankly, even if it doesn't kill you, it will ruin your life. Your life is precious. So are you really saying "F it," about your own life?

As I Shed These Tears

As I shed these tears
I hope you have a great new year
Mamaz I love you so much
I wish I had an answer to take you out for lunch.
I wish I had you at my side
And take you on the scrape for a ride
Those memories so so deep in my mind.
I remember the first time I seen you I said damn,
she's fine
As we met we made it happen
I remember the most the time in the scrape when
I was slappin'
It's time to go I don't know what to say
But it represents the bay

-Mike Jonez

From The Beat: We like the way you mix jokes and sadness in this poem, it has tragedy and comedy in it, just like life!

Addicted to The Streets

I have had a habit to be on the streets everyday and sometimes at friends' houses, but every time I'm not with anybody I be by myself doing the right thing, not the wrong thing.

I wish I was with my family that I really love and miss a lot, but when I'm with my family I have a very good time together and we do a lot of fun things together and have fun with each other and go a lot of different places together and have a lot of fun.

-Julio

From The Beat: You recognize the love you have for your family and the love they have for you. Do not abuse this love and support. The time is now to cherish the love and leave the bull that sits on the streets.

Long Day at Court

Tomorrow I got to go to court, a long day at court.
Got to sit in that holding cell from about eight to four, waiting and thinking and sitting just to walk into the court room for about four minutes... I'm gon' for sure ask for court ordered phone calls. Hopefully somethin' good could turn up, and I guess something to help me with my case.

They gon' offer me a deal, something like wenty that I'm not gon' take. I hate these long days at courts.

-Lil' Marcus

From The Beat: Our fingers are crossed for you, Marcus, and we do admire the way you keep your head up each day, smiling through all this stress. Keep us posted on your case, and also on your state of mind as you fight for your life and hopefully figure out how to live a more peaceful life.

Breaking Habits

- 1) I need to stop cursing.
- 2) I need to change my behavior.
- 3) I need to start praying — that's the most important of all.

-Snow Bunny Melondy

From The Beat: Pray like it all depends on God, and act like it all depends on you!

I'm Solid

What makes me different from most females is I was raised by a pack of wolves. Ask my Oakland chick, she know were I be.

Why lil' Shawnee so solid?

'Cause I stay to myself but I hold a lot of heat.

Ninjas on the block respect me. Why?

'Cause I'll never tell, even if the police ask me when and what happened.

Why lil' Shawnee so solid?

I'm solid 'cause I shine like the star in the sky, lit from the above.

The block love the girl just like trick daddy love the kids.

Some of these females is snitches.

That's why uncle knows they get snitches. Why lil' Shawnee so solid.

'Cause I got brothers that teach me how to be a ride-or-die.

Now I took it to the grave.

-Lashawnte

From The Beat: As you know Shawny, we don't think giving snitches stitches is solid, we think it's sad and messed up. We also don't think riding until you die is solid either, we think it's suicide. What is solid is being a good daughter, a good mother, a good student, a good person, period. What's solid is a girl who uses her mind and heart to do the right thing, a girl who respects herself and others, a girl who helps those in need, a girl who tells the truth, a girl doesn't front. There are a lot of things that make a person solid. So far, you haven't named one.

When I Get Out

What's Up Beat, this is Anthony. I just wanted to say what's up to all in the hall. When I get out I'm gonna have a party with my family and then after go and get some girls! And try to be coo' and lay low for a while.

I remember when I was out, me and my homies would be out hella early, riding around hella high or drunk looking for trouble, cutting school and meeting up with homies. I hope this year would be koo' and try to stay outta jail, because I plan to.

If my homies are reading this what's up, I'm staying solid. Later then Beat!

-Anthony

From The Beat: It's good that you say you "plan" to stay outta jail, but now can you break down how you plan on doing it? We don't just mean "stay out of trouble" we mean like if you DO quit looking for trouble, then you're going to have lots of hours to fill. What are you going to fill them with? A job? Time with your girl and family? Some new passion like writing or making beats or sports? Tell us what your true plan is.

The Pain is Getting Worse

I have a girl that's fine as hell. I don't know why she is crying, and the pain is getting worse. And I can't do nothing for her right now, I'm in jail for doing stuff like selling weed and smoking weed.

Stuff that's making her worry about me, like standing on a corner waiting for a knock to buy weed or crack, next thing you know police pull up, startin' chasing us, we get away but we go right back to the block.

-Gecorey

From The Beat: OK, for your next piece, we really hope you'll break down for us what it is about the block that's so tempting. Is that the only way you know how to make money? What about school? What about those mentoring programs we always talk about, the ones that can put you on the path to real money? Is it the thrill? Your pain is getting worse you say, but it's possible to make it get better. First though, what is it about this messed-up life that you are so hooked on?

Money

Money buys everything except love and personality, silence and peace. Sometimes it can buy you life but it got to be right.

Why can't people just stay solid.

Think about somebody buying your life.

What will you do?

Some say money can buy your life.

-Girly

From The Beat: Some also say that money can't buy happiness. But we believe there is a limit to that axiom. If you are so poor that you can't get a good education, or healthcare or a house to live in, it's much more difficult to be happy. We're not saying it's impossible, but more difficult. That doesn't mean you should sacrifice your morals and your goals just for money. The only thing we believe can really lift you up is an education. All the rest falls into place afterwards.

Bored

I'm just sittin' here, hella bored

I don't know what to say.

So I'm gonna holla next week

oh yeah, I want to say what's up to my lil' bruh bruh. (Lil Vee)

-Mike Jonez

From The Beat: Thanks for making the effort to put something down even when you were feeling uninspired. It happens to the best of us! We hope you get the writing bug again, 'cause if there was an important teacher, it would be you, given what you are up against and how much we all care for you. Your words can not only help you, but save another young person from falling in the same traps

The Taco Truck

The food that makes me always happy, is going to "the taco truck". The reason I like the taco truck is because it's cheap and good! For example, a big burrito for four dollars! And it's good because it's the same kind of food as in my home country.

Another reason is because we don't get hassled to leave. The last thing is that it's the type of food I like to eat. These are all the reasons I like the taco truck. — I can't finish, but if I could I would. Till next time, in The Beat.

-Ali

From The Beat: Hey, those are some good reasons. Man, makes us want to hit the taco truck up right now for a super carnitas burrito! (So are you saying indoor burrito restaurants hassle you to leave? If so, tell us why.)

I can't do nothing for her right now,
I'm in jail

Time to Get My Life Straight

Man, I can't wait to get out the Hall! Man, it's like I been here like five times! It's not like I do it for fun, but I stay in trouble!

Now my wifey needs me though, so I got to get myself straight, for her — and for my mom and granny! So I might try to max out all my time here, but I don't know.

-Nick

From The Beat: So you want to max out your time there to keep it short? Or because you're afraid you'll run or mess up at an outside placement? Either way, we recommend you take yourself off the clock, as hard as that may be to do, and prove to both the system and yourself (plus everyone else) that you're ready to make responsible decisions, refrain from violence and restrain your impulse to find an "easier" way. Go straight and stay strong! Forget about easy or hard, short or long — just keep on!

No Title

The habit that I need to break is smoking every day after school. I need to stop that habit of bein' on the block postin' and get money sellin' drugs. I need to stop that and get a job and do what I have to do. Sometimes I think about when I lost my best friend and I feel like, screw the world and then I just do some shit that I just shouldn't do.

-Girly

From The Beat: It's hard not to feel like that when you lose someone you love. You have to ask why, why someone so young, why someone that I love. There are lots of whys. But taking out your anger by doing things that are bad for you, won't make you feel any better. Try to do things that you know would make your friend happy, knowing you were taking care of yourself.

Them Addictive Sticks

I have to stop smoking cigarettes. But it's hard to stop smoking cigarettes. It's hard to stop because it's addicting. I just can't stop smoking it relaxes me. I'm trying to stop smoking.

-Michael

From The Beat: How serious are you about quitting? What must you do to quit? How 'bout a program? We hope you are successful. Too many people have died by them cancer sticks!

Young Love

What's good Beat? Young Spongebob in love with a seventeen year old that's smart and fine as hell. Dimples only a young teen trying to be faithful and do right so I can go live with her. Soon as I got out the hall I went to a group home all the way in Ukiah, CA. When I first went to the group home I wasn't feeling it but when I seen Diehima it was over. I wanted to do that program and get off probation fast so I can kick it with my patnas - but do it the right way.

The second day I was at the group home I asked Diehima out 'cause every thing I seen about her was hella solid. Me and her was writing letters back and fourth until our relationship got stronger. Every day she told her patnas how she didn't give a damn about how young I was compared to her age, she loved me no matter what. Every time someone would say something bad about me and her she will smash and wouldn't care if it was her patnas or her mama.

Every body deserves to be loved and age ain't nothing but a number. Every time I see my baby Dimples I sing my song "Go Dev" and she know what I mean when I sing it and she the only person that sings to me and it go like this:

Why do you do the things you do just for me while ninjas hated by my side.

You stayed and you did that for me and you didn't have to and for that I love you.

And you trusted me and I trusted you.

You can fight in me I can fight in you.

That's why I can say what I said that day.

Can we get married?

You said yes and it'll stay that way for me

Your ride or die

I looked in your eyes

I'll see the sun set tonight be together for ever my baby yeah

Diehima I love you forever. From yo man Spongebob.

-Stella

From The Beat: We agree, within reason, that age doesn't matter. Three years is a lot between 13/14 and 17, but ultimately it's not a lot. And besides, everyone matures at a different age. We're happy if two young people really love each other and support teach other, especially when things can be so tough out there. Just try to keep everything in context. In other words, don't get so wrapped up that you really do ride or die. This is your first love. We're afraid to tell you that there will be others, whether you believe it now or not. Now should be the time that you focus on getting your life together and finding success free of the juvenile justice system!

Tired of This!

What's the business? This Yung Maniac kickin' it. I'm tired of being incarcerated! I just got out after doing eighteen months in Boys' Republic, and now I'm back for a dirty drug test. They trying to take me back!

Well, I reside in Hayward. Man, if you know me, one love. If you a homeboy, one love. Well, I'm going to be coo'. Man, just everybody stack yo' money and be coo'. Man, Mexican and Puerto Rican pride! Just pimp y'all program and get out the system, 'cause it's tiring!

-Yung Maniac

From The Beat: You are the living proof that it's not enough to "pimp" your program and get out, 'cause you don't just want to get out but stay out of the system! You feel? If "to pimp" a program means to fake it till you make it, then it's a set-up to fall after you hear your freedom call, 'cause all that fake change has you right back in the same old ways that had you in the system for all those months and weeks and days! (Oh, and we cut your "Stack" call 'cause living that life led to your fast fall, and besides you know we don't print turf calls.)

Addicted to Selling

A bad habit that I have is selling drugs that's why I keep coming jail. I would like to change but cant see myself doing nothing else but being on the block serving nocs. But I know I got to change and I hope that one day I am given the power to change. Thank God and bless everybody.

-Seller

From The Beat: Then you must be addicted to coming to jail, going to court, living with a bunch of dudes, having counselors tell you what to do, losing your freedom? Wake up! You have zero to show for living such a stupid lifestyle. It's stupid, look where you sit tonight! Think of the stress this has given you! What else can you do?

Chuckie's Back

What's up, Beat? This your homeboy Chuckie back in these walls. I didn't think I would be writing to y'all again.

-Chuckie

From The Beat: Man, we'd rather have heard from you on the outs, telling us how well you're doing. It might even have helped you stay free. Oh well, catch us up on your life.

No More Running

This is Lil' L from Hayward in 150 Juvenile Hall. I am in here because I ran from my group home, but I've since realized that it is a waste of time to run. I am going to finish my next program so I can be with my family.

-Lil' L

From The Beat: Right on! Stay strong with your decision, 'cause you'll always face opposition, but it's better to hang tough and walk away a free man. However, that won't be enough. You'll also need a plan to stay free and home with your fam' after your release. Give it some thought so you can stay free!

Why I'm So Solid

I'm so solid 'cause you won't find another one like me. If you looking for me my people know were to find me. If them boys come looking for me I don't worry, my squad's got me. Snitch or tell never that come on know my squad know me better than that. From handling the heat to being on my feet. From sun up to sun down my ninjas stay holding it down.

-Lakecia

From The Beat: So remind us why you're solid? We can't figure it out from what you've told us here.... What you write is sad. What you state is simply the reason why you are where you are, locked up. Who's holding what down?

The Way I Feel When I'm In Love

The way I feel when I'm in love.

I want to live and love with you and be one for you. To be near you so I can reach out and touch you.

To make love with you.

To talk to you and be silent with you.

To hold you close every night and wake up with you every morning.

To share my secrets with you.

To be honest with you.

To understand and love and respect you, accepting you as you are.

It's why we're in love!

The one thing that matters more to me than anything else in the world is you.

You are the one who gets all my love and my wishes and my prayers.

But somehow despite all my best intentions I never feel quite safe enough or sure enough to rest.

-Girly

From The Beat: That is quite a powerful profession of your love. First love is a momentous time in your life. But it's important to try not to lose perspective. You sound head over heels for your boo. Make sure you don't get yourself into a place where you are feeling just as terrible because of heartbreak.

Don't Get Caught

I really lived it man, countin' so much paper it hurt yo' hand...

Just last week I got caught with seven-hundred-dollars and close to seventy pills. Yeah I am gettin' it, now they tryin' to put new charges on me. Plus I went to jail in Reno fo' the same shhh. And they just hit a house in Oakland that had 20 boats of pills in there, so they think I had something to do with it 'cause my moms stay in that area. They got fingerprints, DNA, pictures, they got everything. They hit the house Friday, came to see me Sunday, so they didn't waste no time.

That was my friend. I just go over there to say hello and that's it, I didn't know he had that in his house, I didn't know what he was into, 'cause it wasn't none of my business. And that's what I told 'em but they think it's deeper than that so they came again to see me today. I told 'em they might as well get on my visitin' list, since they come so much.

But that's it for now, until I get in touch with the pill man, then I'll have more for you... holla.

-That Ninja

From The Beat: Sounds like you got yourself into a mess of trouble. Even if you had nothing to do with the big bust near your mom's house, you're still slinging pills in jail. Doesn't that just seem like you're asking for trouble? Like you're asking to get caught? We know there feels like a certain amount of prestige having all that cash and all those drugs to sell — but when they're sending you to the Pen of CYA it won't feel like you're the king of you're game any more. It's gonna feel scary and it's gonna get scarier. It's time for you to wake up young man. You want people to know who you are? Do it in a positive way, like going to school and getting a high school diploma then a college degree — not in a negative way, selling drugs and getting sent up the creek.

What I Want To Change

One thing that I would like to change is hanging on the block and doing so many crimes. Because it won't get me anywhere but back in here, or six feet underground.

Another thing I want to change is the way I get along with my mom. I don't want to stop smoking because it is a hobby, and that's what I enjoy doing. I just need to get my act together and stop smoking as much.

-D Wiz U2

From The Beat: You're right about hanging on the block doing crimes... eventually leading to six feet under. How do you plan to change your relationship with your mom? One thing we can suggest is by writing. Sometimes, it's easier to communicate without anger by writing down your thoughts, even the loving thoughts, and establishing good communication that way.

Something Is Missing

Being lonely is the worst thing that I could feel right now. Even when I'm with some of my friends, I still feel lonely, or feel like something is missing. I don't know why I be feeling lonely sometimes. I got plenty of friends, thousands of girls and only one girlfriend, but still be feeling lonely.

-Tabari U2

From The Beat: Moving from childhood into adulthood — adolescence — can be a very lonely time for everybody, whether they're in your situation or not. Maybe it's the chemical and emotional changes that are taking place inside you. Maybe it's that you feel yourself to be different. We remember experiencing this feeling of difference, and therefore loneliness, when we were your age. How do you handle these feelings? Do you have a strategy for moving through the worst times? We're interested to hear more about this if you're willing to share.

These Habits Need To Stop

I need to break a few habits. One of my habits is smoking a lot of weed, but I'm nowhere near Jamaican. Another one is biting my nails. Both of these habits need to stop. Although probation slowed my process of smoking weed, I could change my habit of smoking weed by not thinking about it, and by thinking what smoking weed could do to me.

I could change my habit of biting my nails by thinking where my hands have been all that day. This habit hurt me by being unaware and sleepy. I eliminate my habit by not smoking for a month straight.

-Dizzy U2

From The Beat: It sounds like you know what habits you want to change, why you want to change them, and even how to change them. All that's left is for you to make it happen. We know you can do it. Do you? (We're almost afraid to ask... but, where have your hands been all day?)

Quitting The Weed Habit

One of the habits I need to break is to stop smoking weed, because I smoke too much weed. It be having me ready to do anything. Get myself locked up. I don't want weed to take me somewhere I don't want to be, like locked up for the rest of my life. That's my habit I need to break.

-B-Ray U3

From The Beat: Believe it or not, it's easier to quit the weed habit than it is to quit the cigarette habit. You like smoking weed, and all your friends do it, and that's what makes it hard to quit. But if you stop smoking, you won't feel any bad effects in your body. In fact, your lungs will clear up quickly, you'll stop coughing and you won't get yourself into trouble. Stopping cigarettes makes your body fiend for a nicotine hit. So the hardest part for you is the part where you have to say, "No thank you," the next time you offered a hit.

Smoking Motivates Me

I like smoking because I can speak my mind, and I also like the way it makes me feel. It also motivates me to do things. But because of what I'm doing, it motivates me to do the wrong things. I can also concentrate on one thing when I'm high. When I'm not, sometimes I get distracted easier.

-D Wiz U2

From The Beat: If you're talking about smoking marijuana, then the effects you describe are opposite of everything we know about this drug, which leaves most people less able to concentrate and less motivated. On the same hand, if it's motivating you to do the wrong things, then how smart can it be to keep doing it? As for helping you speak your mind, we notice you have no trouble "speaking" your mind on these pages, and we don't think you're smoking. So maybe you just think it helps you speak your mind because you like to do it...

Me And My "Goodie Goodie" Friends

One time when I was with my friends, they are like the goodie goodie friends that I have, and soon I realized that I was the only one there that has been in the system or been involved with the police. So what I do positive is just seeing what me and those friends have in common, and I found out that we have hella stuff in common.

The negative thing I do is smoke cigarettes when I am hanging out with them, so I feel like at least I am still myself, and don't have to do what they do when I am with them.

-Jacky U3

From The Beat: Were you surprised to find that you had so much in common with your "square" friends? When we read so many young people write that they wish not to be judged by the surface of things, we always remind them that it's a two-way street. This piece reinforces that. Smoking is a really hard habit to break, but it's well worth trying when you consider what it's doing to your lungs and heart...

Loneliness: A Disease That Can Kill

Loneliness is a disease that can kill the mind, body and soul. It is not good for your health, especially when you a brother like me, because I need a female to keep me company. I really need that good lovin' too. Next time I'm gone, any lady that want to give Dubb that love, holla at me.

-Dubb U2

From The Beat: When you reach out to "any lady" for your company, the need you are trying to satisfy won't fill the emptiness of loneliness. It can make your body less lonely, but not your mind and soul. That requires much more — from you. Even in this piece, you're not giving that much, when you consider that you had an hour to write it. You are asking for others "to give Dubb that love," but what is Dubb giving? If it's just your body, you will continue to suffer from the disease of loneliness.

Weed

The habit I needed to break was weed, so I did. But the habit I need to break now is Black and Milds. The reason why I stop smokin' weed was because it was gettin' old and was hurting my pockets, and I rather buy me some fresh Gazies and ain't no joy.

-J-R Unit 3

From The Beat: You're right about weed breaking your pockets, and that's a good reason to quit. It's harder to quit the Black and Mild habit, because that addiction is physical. Your body will crave that nicotine. But at the same time, it's truly hard on your developing lungs and heart, so we hope you find the strength to give that one up, too.

Wanting To Quit Drinking

I want to quit drinking alcohol. Every time I drink, I do something really stupid that I wouldn't normally do. I make a pact with moms to help her and me.

-Yung Deezy U3

From The Beat: That pact you made with your moms sounds like an excellent strategy to help each other. But it's not enough. You also need the help and support of others who have tried — and succeeded — in giving up alcohol. The trouble with drinking is that when you begin you have the best of intentions. But after a minute, you no longer are thinking like yourself, and the best of intentions go right out the window. Don't try to do this on your own. It's too important. It isn't a sign of weakness to reach out for help (AA, for example), but a sign of strength.

I Am Not A Criminal

My life is good even though I am locked down, because I still have my life and health. I am not a criminal. I just made a mistake and trust and believe I will learn from it. Don't judge me. It takes a man to admit that he is wrong. I can still say I am somebody.

-Young Number U2

From The Beat: You're not the only one who can say you are somebody. We can say it too. You're right, it does take a man to admit he was wrong. Imagine how much more of a man you'll become as you apply what you've learned to keep you from making that same mistake. (Sorry about changing your Beat name, but we don't like numbers in those names, even when they are as innocent as your apartment number. So, word to the wise...)

Make Time Go By Faster

What habit I need to break is smoking weed, but I'm not going to because to me it's a good thing. It calms me down and makes me high. I like being high. I wish I was off an E pill right now so I could sleep damn near the whole day. Make time go by faster. When I was out I was smoking like six, or seven blunts a day, for like two weeks straight. Especially for New Years Eve. I don't give a damn, I had a good time.

-Cori U2

From The Beat: Are you having a good time now? Only children think that having a good time is all that's important. Only children "don't give a damn" if their good time hurts themselves or others. As long as you hide from reality by escaping into weed or pills, you aren't growing, which means you are keeping yourself a child. It's time to step up to the next level, to mature into a young man who understands that there are consequences to yourself and your loved ones. If you continue not to "give a damn," then the only conclusion anyone can reach is that you also don't give a damn about your freedom, your future, your family or yourself!

Writing Keeps My Head Up

One of the reasons I write to The Beat is to keep my head up. I be thinking sometime about my life. The day I get out I can get shot; nobody never know what's going to happen in my life, because when you do bad, bad happen to you ten times harder.

-B-Ray U3

From The Beat: We're glad writing for The Beat helps keep your spirits up, B-Ray. What you write also helps teach people who read it and must help them stay cheerful, too. We hope it also helps you to focus on your own issues. It sounds like you're ready to turn a corner. Thinking is the beginning of change. Don't stop. Thanks for keeping it honest.

Loneliness

When I feel lonely I either go to a party and get wasted, or find a beezzy and get wasted with her.

-Yung Deezy U3

From The Beat: If this is the best you can come up with in an hour's workshop, it's pretty obvious that your partying and getting wasted have stunted your growth. Your mental growth, that is. This is just being lazy.

Black And Milds Slow Me Down

What's good with The Beat? This ya boy, Twon, coming from that nice Unit 3 status. Well, let me tell you about my bad habits.

My first bad habit is staying away from people that'll get you in trouble and in danger, because I can either end up in the pen or six feet under, in somebody else's grave yard.

My second habit is stop smoking Black and Milds, because it slows me down — like when I play basketball, football, and dancing. But I've been trying to stop, so am still in condition to do what I do.

-Antwan U 3

From The Beat: Isn't your real challenge finding the strength to say "No" to your friends when they try to persuade to do things you know you shouldn't do, including smoking those Black and Milds? It's hard to stop the smoking habit, but you are doing real damage to your lungs, so we hope you keep trying. But the habit that's hardest to break is the one that has you going along (the easy path to follow) instead of standing for what you stand for, and what they stand for (a much harder path to follow, but well worth it in the long run).

No More Popping Pills

My habit to break is to stop popping pills, also known as "dope." I need to break that habit because it ain't cool, for real, dude. It got a lot of stuff in it — that's why it's also known as "dope." So I used to be like I be off "dope." It ain't cool.

-Rocket U3

From The Beat: If you're smartest enough to see what dope does to you (and to your community), then you're smart enough to stop doing that to yourself. If you keep on doing it, even knowing what it does, then you'll be the dope!

I Gotta Go To School

One habit I would like to change is not getting locked up and somebody telling what to do and when to do it. Also I would like to change me going to school and getting my education.

One food I would love to eat is pizza, nachos and all kinds of sweets, especially when im locked up! I think about all that when I'm locked up.

-Young G U4

From The Beat: You can't change getting locked up without changing what you do to get locked up! It's time to look at yourself, and what responsibility you have for putting yourself in a place where strangers tell you what to do.

Loneliness

Um, loneliness, oh yeah. Times when I get lonely is when I look around a crowd, and then I just get this feeling that I'm just alone and everyone just don't care. But it's ok, because when that happens I just go do something I feel like it's fun, like play on the game that I bring on my PSP, and everything feels better, and there's no one I need to care about.

But in another point, it means I need new friends, but I know some people won't ditch me, though.

-Mikoo U3

From The Beat: You're too good a writer to leave it at this, Mikoo. We wonder if you have the feeling, when you look around a crowd, that you are different, and that's what makes you feel lonely. We remember that kind of feeling when we were your age, so we think most young people feel this as they move from childhood into adulthood. Why do you think you need new friends? Have your old friends led you into trouble? How do you get new friends? Maybe by putting yourself in new places (like a church, or a social club, or a school where you really take part in what's offered).

Loneliness

A lot of the times I do feel lonely coming to jail by myself. But now I realize that it's better to come in by myself because I know that I won't tell on myself like a lot of people would. Sometimes it's good to be alone so you can get your thoughts together and think of how to do better next time because sometimes you do get a roommate talking about all the robberies both of us used to do. Just makes you want to rob people more, which is not good.

-Young Mike U4

From The Beat: No Michael, it is NOT better to come here by yourself. It's also NOT better to come here with anyone else. The only thing that you could describe as better, is not coming here at all! When you and your roommates talk about robbing people, do you think past the money you might get? Do you think about God, for example, or why it's all right to take what someone else has worked hard to earn? Do you ever think that if we live by the rule that the stronger take from the weaker (and those with bigger guns take from those with smaller guns), then there will ALWAYS be someone bigger and better armed than you? Do you see the connection between the victims you have made, and the victim the system has made of you?

Happy Food

The food that make me stay happy is pasta. If I was to come in the house and I was mad because of something, I'll ask my mom to fix me a pot of pasta to cool me down, and I put spaghetti sauce on it.

-Gregory U3

From The Beat: Sounds sooo good, Gregory. You have to ask your mom to teach you how she does it, so you can feed yourself... and keep yourself happy! We know you can write more than this, though Gregory. You have a whole hour, so we know you can come up with more than two sentences... Next time.

Pupusas Is My Happy Food

My happy food is El Salvadorian pupusas. Where I get my pupusas is a place in The Mission.

-Reynolds U2

From The Beat: Is that the only place you go for pupusas? Are they better than other pupusas. You need to give us more than two sentences. You have an hour to write. If you are lazy about it, you will get in the habit of being lazy about other things, and that will not help you as you move through life.

I Need Help

The habit I need to break is stop smokin' weed and drinkin' Hennessey and Remy Martin. It hurt me in hella ways, with family and with friends. The way I started to stop, but you feel me, it is too hard, so I am still doing it and it is still causing shhhh up in my life and in other people's life. It is messed up.

-Young Majic U4

From The Beat: The bad news is that you have a disease, which is why you can't just stop by telling yourself to stop. The good news is that in order to get control of this disease, you must want to. It is clear from what you've written that you do want to stop hurting yourself and your loved ones because of alcohol. Please believe us when we say you have to reach out and seek the help of others; you cannot do it alone. Asking for help is not a weakness, but a strength. There are organizations that can help, like AA (which works for many), and there are other programs. We urge you to take back control of your life because unless you do, this will continue to eat away your life until you will be so into the alcohol, you no longer will want to get out, it's all bad from then on..

I'm An Ordinary Ninja

My bra, Twon, is the sickest ninja, you feel me? He don't take no shhh. Me, I'm in ordinary ninja. I don't take no bs either, but if you mess wit' me, I'm a mess wit' you, and I'ma leave at that, and I'm gone.

-Tariq U3

From The Beat: What does this piece teach anyone, Tariq? When you have an hour to write something for The Beat and you take the easy way out, writing nothing more than this kind of childish boasting, it's like you've wasted your time and ours. This is your resources. Use it for something that means something.

Me

They say life is a struggle and only the strong survive, so does that mean that I'm weak 'cause I can't survive? I'm miserable in sadness and don't know what way to go, I feel alone, but yet it's people around me. Me thinking I'm grown, but only bein' 17, I try to stand up, but I can't. I don't see people around me. I'm dead.

-D-M U4

From The Beat: Many people don't understand what "survival of the fittest" really means. It means that if you survive — and you are clearly a survivor — then you are fit, or strong. You CAN survive because you HAVE survived. The feeling of loneliness can make you think you're weak, and different from other people your age, but we promise you that we felt this way too, when we were 17. Sometimes, you have to just take a deep breath and have faith that what you're experiencing right now is like a photograph of just one moment in your life. There is a future, and there is life after incarceration.

Boys Toys

My habit is that I seem to like all the wrong girls, like the ones that lie and cheat with other ninjas. So I sleep with my banga. I'm sorry to say that, but that's how it is, and hopefully a girl will be on top of my pillow instead of my banga bein' under it.

Another habit is disrespecting my mom, not like that, because I never called her a bad name or nothing like that. But I did disrespect her, like coming in the house late.

-D-M U4

From The Beat: Who or what you sleep with is not a matter of hope but a matter of choice. If you attract shady girls, it's probably because you are acting shady yourself. When you're with them, do you lie and cheat, or are you honest and faithful. Should girls have to live under a different set of rules or expectations than boys? As for the guns and gunplay, we had to take some of this out because, despite your words, you do glorify these deadly toys when other little boys who like dangerous toys read what you write.

I've Got To Stop Skipping School

The habit I need to break is not going to school, 'cause if I don't go to school, I will miss out on everything that education has to offer.

-Young Meez U3

From The Beat: You're so right, YM. But by giving us the shortest pieces you can think of, you're also telling us that you aren't taking school seriously. That will only hurt you, as you so clearly see. Next time, please take just one topic and write something more than two or three sentences about it. Teach us something. That's what The Beat is for.

What's My Happy Food?

My favorite food is burritos because I get to be with my family, and we get to laugh at things we all did in the past.

-Octavio U2

From The Beat: Sitting down with family and enjoying a meal together has a way of making everything seem better. What kind of stories or things do you guys talk about? What else do you eat besides burritos? In a one-hour writing workshop, you can do better than a single sentence. Don't be lazy!

I Want To Get Back To My Life

When I get out of here, I am going to get my life together and do what I have to do to stay out of jail, get back to myself, my life, and get it together. The first thing I want to do is see my brother and family, my mom and dad, and my friends. The second thing I want to do — go get a lot of food and eat it all by myself. Third thing I want to do — go with my girl, mess around and talk, one-on-one together, about our lives. Last thing — stay on top of my game and stay clean.

-Jb Money U5

From the Beat: We think every one of your goals is worth achieving, and we have no doubt that you can achieve them. Keep that last one high on your list because staying "clean" could be the difference between freedom and its opposite.

Letting Da Streets Eat Me Alive

Sitting back, thinking 'bout life, why I be letting da streets eat me alive? I have younger siblings I have to look after, but one barely like me. My granny — she ain't no good — only when it's time to turn me in.

Moms ain't never been moms. Pops, who be whatever I want to call him. Hope this thang called life I can fix, but I know I can.

Thangs will get better. You know how? 'Cause I'ma fix it. I'ma fix me and mine.

-Turquoist U5

From the Beat: It sounds like things have been pretty messed up for you. But there comes a time when, to fix things, you have to look to yourself, and to your own responsibility for the consequences of your choices. Your granny may have turned you in, for example, but if you had done nothing to be turned in for, she couldn't have done it to you. Growing up is hard to do, but staying a kid in an adult world is even harder.

When I Get Out

When I get out, I'm gone be a new person, but I'm still gone be Lil' D from da 'hood. Yeah, but anyways, I'm gone be a jockey, go to school out the city. So, yeah, I'm in this hole now, so I can't do nothing. So I write yo' next week.

-Lil' D U5

From the Beat: Being locked up does not mean you "can't do nothing." In fact, if you do nothing, you're letting the time do you. Use this time to think about what you did to get yourself locked up, and what you need to do to keep yourself free. That's doing something.

I Keep Goin' To Jail

One bad habit I have is I keep goin' to jail. I been locked up six times, and every time it feels like it gets worse. I been to three group homes and have only barely completed one. I gotta get outta this habit before it gets too late, and I end up goin' outta state somewhere. I don't want that, so I gotta break this bad habit.

-Sey Sey U5

From the Beat: There are many reasons to break the jail habit, but the biggest is that each time you go in, you dig that hole a little deeper. At some point, if you don't start taking responsibility for your choices and changing them, the hole is so deep that you can't crawl out. You're not there yet, so now's the time.

Gettin' Out

Man, what's up with the Beat? Man, it' about that time for me to get up out of here, man, 'cause I been in here for about four months lookin' at these walls. But me, I'm up out of here in like three to four weeks. But I'm going to Glen Mills though, ya dig. Knock this time ya dig. Because I'm trying to be back on the block with the thugs, messin' with some girls right now or anything. Man I can't say that I'm not going to come back, but I'ma try.

-D-Boom U4

From the Beat: What is it, exactly, that you're gonna try? We don't see any evidence in this piece of trying at all. We don't see any evidence of thinking at all. All we see is a boy trying to act like what he thinks a man should be, and by so doing, keeping himself from growing out of childhood and into adulthood. If all you want to do is "knock your time out," then you can be sure that time will knock you out. We'd like you to take those last words, "I'ma try," and write a whole page about what they mean to you. We want to know what "trying" means.

Breaking The Juvenile Hall Habit

A habit that I need to break is coming to juvenile. I have been here like nine times, but for some reason I keep coming back. Hopefully this time I won't come back, but I said that every time I was here, so I don't know if I'ma come back or not. But I'm not gonna lie and say that I'm not gonna come back. But I could tell you I'm gonna do the best I could to not come back.

I am just gonna try to stay out of trouble, so there would not be a tenth time. If I make it a tenth time, I'm not gonna be so lucky; I'm gonna get sent to L.A. if it's a tenth time. When I get out I'm not going home, I'm going to a group home anyway, but it's still close to San Francisco, but not that close. It's not in the Bay, but it's closer.

-Quez U3

From The Beat: Coming to the hall is not the habit you have, Quez, it's doing the things that lead you to the hall that you have to break. We appreciate that nobody knows for sure what the future holds, and promises are easily made and just as easily broken. But when you say "I'm just gonna try to stay out of trouble," it almost sounds like you little choice in the matter, that you are just a leaf floating along in a stream, and whatever comes, you have no control over. That, of course, is not true. You do have control. The question is whether you will exercise it or not. Try not to be a follower, doing whatever your peers are into. That's the easy path to follow right now, but if you follow that easy path now, you're creating a much more difficult one to follow later. Saying "no" can be the hardest thing in the world to do, but it can also be the most important thing for your own future. Good luck.

A Never-Ending Cycle

Looking back at a past experience that happened to me is when I started coming to YGC. I thought it was a never-ending cycle. I feel that since I got into the system, it made my life harder than it should be. It seems that even when I get out of here, I still don't feel free, and I think that's a sad life to have when you are a teenager.

I have been to YGC seven times. I have been to three group homes, and didn't complete not one. I feel trapped and I don't know how to get out of this living hell. But I know that everything happens for a reason.

-Tete B5

From The Beat: The system can be a never-ending trap if you don't do something to break the cycle. You're right, it is sad when a teenager grows up feeling trapped. But what responsibility for this feeling is yours? Why haven't you finished any of the group homes you've been to, and why do you keep coming back here. You point to the system, but what about pointing to yourself? If you cannot answer the question of what you are doing to mess up your life, then you will be forced to repeat this cycle over and over again. Since we know the system is not going to change, that put a huge responsibility on your shoulders. Examine yourself. See what you must do to stay free. Then do it. Time is running out.

Good Habits, Bad Habits

I feel that habits can be good and bad, for example hustling. You may do it sell drugs stealing electronics, it's all bad habits. At the same time you can have good habits, for example like reading, being a child mentor or tutor. But at the same time I think all habits, good or bad, should be broken.

As for me, the habits that I have I not trying to break right now in this point of stage because I would hate to break a habit and then go back to it out of peer pressure.

-Sindnesia U4

From The Beat: Maybe you need to work on breaking the habit of bowing to peer pressure! We agree with you about some habits being good ones. Reading and helping younger people with their schooling are both good examples. But if you put off breaking bad habits because you're afraid that you won't be able to stand up to your peers, that's a habit that can have extremely serious consequences. And it won't be your peers that pay the cost, but you.

The Past

Looking back at this experience, I used to fight in elementary and middle school over children or stupid things. I used to be the type not to punk out our something. I wasn't trying get that 187 on me, so I did what I did back in the days. Also, I used to hustle playing cards just to get money in my pocket.

-Jason U6

From The Beat: It appears that your activities in the past have led you to the present, which is lock-up. When you put your eyes forward instead of back, what do you see in your future? If it's more of the same activity by you, it will also be more of the same consequences by the system. What changes do you plan to make?

Trying To Go To Y-Tec

Yeah, what's up, Beat? Man, I'm just trying to get up out of here, and I am just trying to do good up in here, so I can go to Y-Tec. They should be interviewing me in a couple of days. If they accept me, I will be able to go back home and I will be going to their school. If I go to they school, I think I could do it and get off of probation.

Maybe this Y-Tec shhh just might be good, because it will keep me on track, so that I don't slip up, because I will already know the consequences. If I know what's in it for me, if I know what's going to happen, I don't think I will mess up. I can try to do my best, but if I can't, I don't know what to say. But I'm going to holla at y'all in a minute. All right, then, Beat.

-Young Drew U5

From the Beat: We hope you get to Y-Tec because it is a good program and can help you. But the most important factor that will determine success or failure is the attitude you bring to the program. If you approach it as "this Y-Tec shhhh," that's what you'll find. But if you approach it like, "I have a problem that I better deal with now, before it deals with me later," you have a much better chance of succeeding. Good luck.

Life Is Like Chess

Everyone next move is their next mistake. But we don't know when that next move or mistake is going to come or happen, and that's the human race. But there's different activities and everyone can be touched. Life is like a chess game. Make your next your best move

-Quez Man U6

From The Beat: There are some similarities between life and chess. Both require thoughtful strategies to succeed. Both take a long time to complete. But there are also significant differences. In life, you don't have to be a pawn unless you allow yourself to be used by others (the kings and queens). There is no need for the next move to be the next mistake, unless you act without thought. So, what will your next move be?

People Come And Go

Man, I see people come and go cryin' because they court date is in a month. The same people that was cryin' now wolfin' about how they stackin' G's and got a ride and five females. When it's time for phone calls, they askin' if you got some homegirls, hahaha. All of a sudden they here three weeks talkin' 'bout changin' and school, get no write-ups, stay on crew. They finally get out, did one month, hit the streets, go to the 'hood talkin' about they was holdin' it down, actin' a foo'...

I see this all the time. The halls are gettin' watered down. It ain't what it used to be. A'right den, y'all keep your head up.

-Cartoon U7

From The Beat: When are you going to see that we just are not impressed at all by how much more of a gangster you are than those you are poking fun at in the hall? You're too young to realize that in every year we've been doing The Beat, we always get the same nonsense from those who think of themselves as the "true" Gs, and that the halls aren't what they used to be, etc. etc. Have you ever seen male starlings (a black bird with red feathers) sitting on fence posts singing out their songs and hoping to attract female starlings? Each starling thinks he is the one and only, the first and last, to sing his song, to be the "baddest" starling of them all, as if no starling came before him and none will follow. This is something that happens year after year. You are a starling sitting on your own fence post thinking you're the biggest, baddest starling that ever sat on that same fence post. We've seen so many starlings come and go, we're just not impressed with the boasting. We're only impressed by deeds, not words. You haven't shown us any deeds to impress us yet. We're waiting...

I "Beat"lieve

-Tweety U7

From The Beat: We cut the piece you submitted under your name (Tweety) because we published the identical piece last week under the name Hot-Rod. We don't know if you've submitted someone else's piece or your own, but in any case, we won't print the same piece twice, and we won't print a piece someone else has written.

My Habits And Favorite Food

I have a habit that I need to break. I think that I need to treat my mom a little better 'cause my mom treats me very good. I need to treat her the same way 'cause when I'm in a situation like this, she is the only one that has my back in here and at home.

I also need to break the habit of smoking weed 'cause when I smoke, that is all that I think about. I push everything else to the side, like school, my family and things like that that I need. And I really don't need weed.

Those are my habits that I need to break.

My happy food is McD's 'cause when I'm mad, I just go and get me some. And I feel way better after.

-Tay U2

From The Beat: Do you see a connection between the two habits you want to break? We do. If smoking weed becomes your entire focus, then of course you are not giving your mother the respect she deserves, as you yourself admit. One way you might want to think about it is to consider all the things your mother has given up for you, all the sacrifices she has made and continues to make. You can be sure that there have been many, many times that she wanted to do something or buy something for herself, but made the choice that you were more important than what she wanted. That's what mothers do. But now that you are no longer a small child, maybe you should start thinking about sacrificing some of what you like doing in order to make her life easier. We think that giving up weed, no matter how much you like to smoke, would improve your relationship with your mom, because you would be able to think clearly about what you are doing, and it would be harder to forget the debt you owe this woman who continues to support you. Maybe it's time to start paying back. Next time you're tempted to light up, go have a Big Mac instead!



Don't Want To Get Shot

When am outside, I have to look at the cars, because I just have a habit and people be coming to shoot at us and I don't want to get shot.

-Delvonta U3

From The Beat: What is the habit you have that makes others come after you with guns? That would be enough for us to quit, whatever it is. Why isn't it enough for you?

Food

My happy food is strawberries. They hella good. I can eat 'em at anytime with or without ice cream and it make me happy 'cause they hella good

-D-MAC U4

From The Beat: We love strawberries too. Don't you feel sorry for people who are allergic to them? Have you ever eaten strawberry shortcake? Mmmmm.

A Fatal Life

On April 14, 1989, a monster was born. A face you could love and an attitude you could hate. As days went on, the monster would get bigger, would never cry. Mom would leave the monster alone.

One day the monster's uncle was shot more than a dozen times and survived, and all it did was turn the monster to a serious beast. Never will the beast die with his head down. Only with my head up

-Nick Beam U6

From The Beat: Let's examine the beginning of this piece to see if it's true or not. We want you to try to picture that baby born in 1989. Look carefully at the child with the face you could love and tell us, does that baby already have an attitude that you can hate? We don't think so? Attitudes are learned through life's experiences, and just as they are learned, new attitudes can replace old ones through new experiences which teach new lessons. Don't take so much pride in the beast you see in yourself, because beasts are slain. Instead, think about the kinds of lessons this beautiful baby was exposed to that turned it into a hateful "monster," and realize that no one is born a monster. If your mom was never there, then she must take a large share of the responsibility for turning you into what you've become. But now you have to get past that, because now you are the one responsible for your own attitudes. So now it's time for you to be mother to yourself. Educate yourself. Nurture yourself. Find the sweet and innocent child that is still inside you, but bruised and injured by life, and give him the love that will mend his soul.

Lonely

When I was lonely, I always talk to myself. I like to be lonely, because I would think about everything. Lonely can help me think about everything you do in the past. I always want to be lonely, because I want to think about my future. When I was lonely, I always feel good about myself.

-Sosene U5

From the Beat: We think you're confusing the word "lonely" with the word "alone." They are not the same. Feeling lonely is not a good feeling, even though you can often feel good when you're alone. Look up the word "lonely" in a dictionary, and maybe your answer will be different.

Leavin' The Street Life

I look back at the past like, damn, seem like all my friends left me. My ninjas Meeze, Meech, my big homie Mat. Man, this shhh is crazy. I really miss my ninjas. Man, the street life ain't the shhh for real. How I feel now, the block. That ain't go get me nowhere.

-Lil' Scari U6

From The Beat: It sounds like reality is kicking you in the backside, and that those kicks are opening your eyes. It's never too late to see what's real, and to make the adjustments you need to make to move your life in the direction you want to go. Good luck.

What Is Your Happy Food?

My favorite food is Mexican food, 'cause it is tasty and fills you up.

-Young Meez U3

From The Beat: This is the lazy man's answer — one sentence in an hour to write! What does this tell us? If an alien came to earth and read your few words, would he even want to try this food (that we know is delicious)? Taking the lazy way out is only cheating yourself.

Being Around The Wrong People

I want to break the habit of being around the wrong people. I am trying to eliminate it on my day to day life. I just don't, or try not to think about it.

-Anthony U2

From The Beat: Does not thinking about it work for you? What leads you to be around "the wrong people" to begin with? What makes them "wrong," and who are "the right" people. These are all questions you should have asked yourself and tried to answer. The Beat wants more than two or three sentences. You need to put in a little more effort, meaning you need to think a little deeper.

I think that I need to treat my mom a little better...
'cause when I'm in a situation like this, she is the only
one that has my back in here and at home.

Over Again

I remember it like yesterday
It was the summer of 2004
You were walking on by my way
I swear that I've seen you before
You was actin' hella shy
But you was lookin' all fly
And when you walked on by
So glad you said hello
And ever since then, I adored you
Two years later
We still together
You still the same sweetness

-Tatizzle

From The Beat: He sounds like a good man. How's he doing with you inside? You'd better get out of juvy and stay out, don't you think? After all, he's outside! What's your plan to succeed?

Mighta

You mighta seen me in Oakland
Postin' on the block
But you still don't know nothin' 'bout me
You mighta seen me deep
But you still don't know nothin' 'bout me
You mighta seen me wit' different color hair
But you still don't know nothin' 'bout me
You mighta seen me in the dubs
Blowin' on a blunt
But you still don't know nothin' 'bout me
You mighta seen me in a scraper
Wit' grapes in the air
But you still don't know nothin' 'bout me
You mighta seen me in the town
Actin' hella wild
But you still don't know nothin' 'bout me
You mighta seen me at different parties
Sippin' on hella Bacardi
But you still don't know nothin' 'bout me
You mighta seen me wit' Too Short and Keak
da Sneak
But you still don't know nothin' 'bout me
You might know my name is Diehima
But you still don't know nothin' 'bout me
Until you can walk a mile in my shoes
That's when you can say
You know somethin' 'bout me
Until then
You still don't know nothin' 'bout me

-Purpicious

From The Beat: What is so special about you? Give us one reason why anybody would like to be in your shoes? Will we learn something from knowing you? Will it benefit us? What do you about the future? Are you always going to live the same life you are living? What's so fun and special in being known by a group which is seen as a menace to society by the people, in being a pot head, and just hanging on the block and putting your life at risk? What should we know about you?

I'm Back

What's up, Beat Within? Well, as for me, I'm doing cool. I'm hella stressed out because I don't wanna go back to placement and plus, on top of that, I'm seventeen years old and I don't need to be in placement no more. It ain't goin' really teach me nothin'. But there's nothin' I can really do but try to do my program and get out, so I hope I can do that.

-Purpicious

From The Beat: It sounds like the authorities aren't giving you a choice. So, we suggest you to go, do it, get out and go home. They won't let you go unless you accomplish with whatever they send you to. It's your choice to either refuse to do it or to be made to do it and more...Your call!

The Reason I Came

An experience I had that I thought was bad but something good came out of it was me coming here and the reason why I came.

-Baby Gangsta

From The Beat: Without writing the about your case, can you write about the reasons that underlie what caused you to become incarcerated? What have you learned by being inside?

Talking Is Dead

Talking is dead! That's all Big Mike says every day.

-Shy

From The Beat: It's part of his job and facility regulations. Right? Listen up, don't talk back, and work on bettering your life so you never return to juvenile!

What's Up, Beat?

In MCJH (Marin County Juvenile Hall) there's nine girls, which is a lot. Every girl except for me are going to placement. I can't believe it. I guess I got lucky because I should be going, too, but I'm not. It's sad, because they're all my friends. Most of them are really young, like 12-15 years old. I hope they do good and finish their program. Good luck, girls. I love you all.

-Gemini

From The Beat: Can you show your friends going to placement and yourself that you can meet the terms of your probation and stay out of any mess and out of juvy? Your example may give them strength to do the same. You do have luck, and maturity to an extent, so use it!

Back In The Hall

What it do, Beat Within? It's me, Purpicious, back in the hall, but I ain't tripping, 'cause I'm 'bout to go to a lower level. The only thing, I left my baby, and I know that she is mad at me, but I'm gonna keep my promise to her and to good.

-Purpicious

From The Beat: We're sorry that you're back in the halls, leaving your baby on the outs. Just do your program and take advantage of all the opportunities it may come upon your release. Good luck with motherhood! You have a responsibility, take care of your child!

Damn

Damn! back here in the hall, in orange and blue, lookin' at these brick walls, thinkin' to myself, "what the hell went wrong?" But, hey, what can I say? I did what I did, now I gotta pay. I can't blame nobody but myself, 'cause I did the crime, now I 'bout to do the time.

-Purpicious

From The Beat: Fair enough! You've already learned a lot when you take responsibility for whatever is going down now. What did go wrong? There is an answer, even if you only want to answer your question for yourself. We hope you have the courage to accept your answer and that it will help you stay cool on the outs. What is that answer?

Starting Off The New Year Being Locked Up

I can't believe I'm back. I'll do really good and then I do really bad. Right now I'm in the middle. Ever since October, I've been in every month.

I just went to court and the judge said I only have a few more months on probation if I do good. All I have to do is to obey my 10pm curfew, go to court weekly and give clean U-As.

-Gemini

From The Beat: That sounds pretty reasonable, don't you think? Isn't your freedom worth complying with those stipulations? You can do it! Then you'll have February and the rest of your life free!

I'm Hella Heated

I'm hella heated, 'cause the court tryin' play me. They tryin' lock me up for nothing, then they gon' try to send me to placement for some petty ass crime. I'm 'bout to go dummy up in this place.

-Baby Face

From The Beat: These are the consequences some actions come with. You need to be strong and deal with whatever punishment they apply to you. Your last card to play is to deal with what comes next. Are you ready for that?

Nemo

I was sitting in my room and I was just chillin', kickin' back, and all of a sudden we saw an ant. But it was a retarded ant, 'cause one of its legs was cut off. Sooo, we called it Nemo, like the one from (the movie) "Finding Nemo." But we put it in a cup and put paper on it, and the next day it disappeared.

-Shy

From The Beat: Somehow, even with only one leg, Nemo figured out how to climb out of your cup and escape. Good for Nemo!

Thinking About My Baby

I'm sittin' here, thinkin' 'bout how much I miss my baby and how I should be there wit' her right now.

I know 'ya thinkin' why somebody as fine as me is messin' wit' a female. Well, I'm a tell you why. She treat me wit' respect, she accepts me for who I am, she's not in a rush to get my goodies. She's there when I need her and I'm there when she needs me. If you seen her, you'll think she's a straight ninja—no hints of any female in her, I can tell you that for a fact. She can handle her business by herself. She's smart, fine as hell, and got a good head on her shoulders.

This one for her, just to let her know I didn't forget about her. Also, it's been two months today that we been together. 1-10-07. I love you, baby.

-Purpicious

From The Beat: Nobody here at The Beat is worried about who you love. This is your choice and we respect that. Why are you two apart? Has she given you advice which you haven't take advantage of? Maybe you two can work something out, a solution, to keep yourself out of trouble together. It might work.

Talking About My Love

TBW: What would you like to be interviewed about today? What's on your mind?

D: I wanna talk about the girl I want to marry.

TBW: Great! Who is she? How is she so terrific that you want to marry her?

D: She so fine. Her eyes are so beautiful She got a hummingbird's butt.

TBW: Okay. So tell us more about her. What is her personality like? What does she like to do? What do you do together?

D: She blow a lotta grapes. She's older than me. She about a good thirty something, almost forty. She got the body of an eighteen-year-old. She's light, bright, pretty, carmel. She got a few kids. She smart and affectionate. When I look into her eyes, it's like going to the Bahamas, where I ain't never been.

TBW: Where did you meet her? How do you know her?

D: Through family, friends. I've known her a long time, but I think she's known me ever since I was born, ever since I had enough knowledge to look into a female to see what she about and what she wanted. It seemed like she wanted something from me. For now, I'm willing to give it to her and be the most passionate man she ever met.

TBW: Do you write her from here?

D: Yes, and ever since the time I received a letter from her, she writes me back. She come in here to visit every Saturday, Wednesday and Monday. She make eye contact with me and every time we can meet, I get lost in her eyes that take me in a journey I can't recover from. I feel even though our age difference is very extreme, I feel our relationship will expand like elastic.

-Henny

From The Beat: Obviously you don't you think she's very old for you? How does she get access to visit you? What do your parents/blood family think? She could be your mother. In the law's eyes, she's a felon and could go to prison. Recently women and men who have had sexual relationships with minor are in prison for the same reason. You should be careful with your relationship. Even if you turn eighteen, how are you going to support an older woman with a few kids? Have you thought about it? You should be looking for someone closer in age.

Loneliness

Man, I'm in Walden House
Filled with girls you probably wouldn't know
If you seen 'em
Man, I feel so lonely and stressed
I don't know how many times I confessed
Man, I feel like I'm going insane
I feel so much pain
Don't nobody in here know
What I been through
They in here tryin' to judge me
Don't even know me
They be tryin' to get all close to me
But the minute I turn my back
They straight up talking that smack
Man, I feel so lonely
Next thing I know
One of my crimes
Steps though the door
You know I had to put her on
Man, staff be tryin' to straight brainwash
Tryin' to make you think it's all bad
Man, I can't wait to go home
All these ladies could kiss my ass
Man, this is so real
It's really how I feel
Man, I'm lonely for real

-Lil' K

From The Beat: We admire you for your honesty, Lil' K, but not so much for your point of view. Experience tells us that the most important ingredient to success in programs (whether it's Walden House or any other program) is the attitude you bring to it. If you come with a "this is bs" attitude, then you'll find bs. If you come with the attitude that you have something to learn (as we all do), and that maybe you can benefit from what you learn here, you will find things to learn. The pain you're feeling is the basis of your addiction, seeking to make it go away. The trouble is, as you should be able to see as your mind clears, not only has it failed to make the pain go away, it's actually made the pain worse because it's led you down dark paths into places you don't want to be. We're sorry you're feeling so lonely, but we hope you give this program a little time, and that you do it with an open mind. If you think you already know everything you need to know, then you are trapped in childhood. Adults know that they are always able to learn more, and that as they do, they bring that new knowledge into their daily lives and change — not who they are, but how they act. You need to make some changes or your future can only be bleak, but you won't make those changes by us telling you. Only by you being mature enough to see it for yourself.

Past Experience

A bad experience that I had where I thought it was "all bad" and then a while later I looked back and thought, "Hey, it wasn't that bad," was when I was on the streets, homeless, on dope and up for weeks. When I was going through this, I thought it was all bad and was something I could never get out of. Now I look back at everything I learned on the streets and I would never take it back.

-Sara

From The Beat: Every experience is the basis of our learning. The only question is whether what you learn is put to good use or not. It seems like you are putting those experiences to good use, so we're happy that you've come through a dark period into light.

My First Boyfriend Is Still On My Mind

I have been thinkin' about my ex-boyfriend a lot lately. He was my first at everything. I miss him so much, but I keep forgetting to remind myself that he messed me over in so many ways. He took advantage of me and he walked all over me. Then he left me all alone on the streets with nothing. But through all of this, I miss him shakin' his dreads and going dumb. Peace. 2007.

-Pooh

From The Beat: Boys can be heartless and cruel, but in the end, they're only cheating themselves, so extend a little pity in his direction. Until he grows up, he will never appreciate someone like you. Enjoy the good memories, and use what you've learned to be a wiser "consumer." Things will change when you start meeting adults (meaning responsible men who care) and not children.

Habit

Goin' out drinkin', smokin', you know, just to do it. I messed up my life hella much and now I got to start over. But when I turned into that big "teen," that is when I started to be outside at, like, 12:00 p.m.; the next birthday, 3:00 a.m.; my fifteenth birthday, 5 a.m.; 16th, 10 a.m. in da mornin'.

Man, I used to pop, smoke and drank all the time I was out, but I'm tryin' to change all my shhh. It's 2007. I'm 'bout to start over.

-Peaches & Cream

From The Beat: At age 16, you're already a young lady. What you describe here is the behavior of a little child. Yes, it's time to start over... but you don't really have to start over because you have learned a lot in those "lost" years. Put what you've learned to good use, and that means stay off the pills, the smoke and the alcohol. Every problem you have can only be made worse by chemical dependency (and alcohol is one of the worst of chemicals to be dependent on).

Hurt And Pain

Hurt and pain live in us all, whether we want it to or not. Hurt comes from sadness and every other bad thing that has happened to us. Pain comes from the anger we have inside. What we all need is love and happiness. Try to think happy thoughts and about good things that have happened, and pray.

-LaRonda

From The Beat: We don't think pain comes from anger, but that anger comes from pain. You have tried to medicate that pain with drugs, and you have found that it didn't work. Now you're learning new techniques for locating the source of your pain and dealing with it in ways that don't make you hurt even more. By clearing your mind, you are giving yourself the ability to build a new kind of life. It won't be pain-free (no one's life is). But it will be a life you can build on and take to a new level. Just keep moving in the direction we see you moving now.

Reminiscent

Lookin' back on my last "all bad" situation, I now realize that it was "all good." Check it out. My moms told me that I ain't comin' home. When I first heard that, I was hurt, sad, torn and I cried my eyes out. In the moment I was hella mad. I felt abandoned once again. But that just opened up the door to my life. I took that and ran with it. I won't forget to look back at her when I'm on top.

-Bam

From The Beat: We would love to know the details behind the words, "I took that and ran with it." Where did you run? What did you find? How will you look back at your mom when you are on top? What does "on top" mean to you? So many questions, so few answers...

My moms told me
that I ain't comin'
home. When I first
heard that, I was
hurt, sad, torn and I
cried my eyes out.



Broken Heart

Me and my man
Together 'til the end
I thought it would last
But, man, I should have thought
Back to my past
How long can a relationship last
When you really don't know that person?
Love is a hard thing to find
Don't go lookin' for love
Let love find you
I think that love can make you
Break you
Or even take you
It all depends on
What you let it do to you
Don't get your heart broke
Don't fall in love
It ain't worth it
Unless you getting paid double
No scratch that...
It ain't worth it
If it most likely puppy love
That's my heartbreak

-LaRonda

From The Beat: We were worried that you would get your heart broken by this relationship, and we expressed our worry... There's one thing about broken hearts, though, that everybody who reaches a certain age can understand (because we've all had our hearts broken at least once) and that is what appears to be a permanent injury begins to fade into insignificance when real love comes along. We like your advice not to go looking for love, but to let it come looking for you. But we know that when real love enters your heart (which means with a responsible man, and not a little boy) you'll be singing love's praises. Don't worry. It will happen.

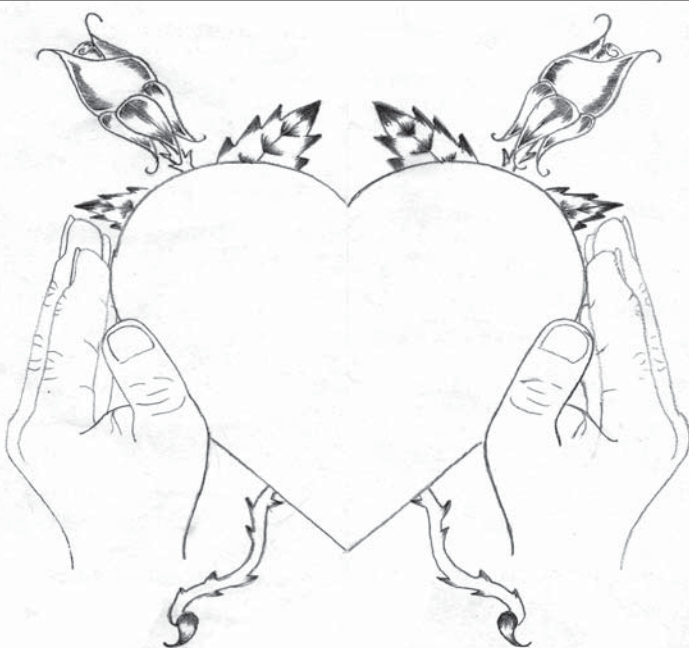
From "All Bad" To "All Good"

About eight and a half months ago, I was homeless, smokin' crank, sleepin' with everybody, and my mom was playin' tough love. To me this was "all bad!" I thought this was the end of the world and I thought I had nothing to live for any more. Then, when I came to rehab, I realized that it was actually "all good." I say this because if all of this would of never of happened, where would I be?

-Pooh

From The Beat: You'll never know where things might have gone if this or that hadn't happened. But what is refreshing about this piece is that you do know where things have led, and that you appreciate what you've learned on your journey so far. The road stretches out before you and is long. Make the journey count!

RAYMOND These writings are from a young man who's really enthusiastic about seeing his work in *The Beat Within* publication. It's his first time writing for us, so let's welcome him with open arms as we can tell he has a lot of things to teach. He writes five poems. The first is a letter to his mother and from that letter we can tell why he's struggled the way he has. Though it may be nice to have a relationship with your mother like that of a sister, but it takes away from some of the positive direction a mother needs to guide her children in the right direction. His second, "Imagination," is a proclamation of what his imagination means to him and why people may not understand it. In his third, our personal favorite, he makes the connection between the war going on in the streets with the war going on overseas. Then he closes with two equally powerful poems. We can tell we're really going to enjoy this writer's presence, so let's roll out the carpet and let him make his grand entrance. He's writing from a group home in Chandler, Arizona...



Mary Jane

Mary Jane,
That's the girl I'm with.
People say she's nasty,
But that's a myth.
She was with me,
When my mom got locked up.
She was there,
When I drank Old E in a cup.
She was always there,
Even when no one was there.
She looks so fine,
Even with her red hair.
I had lots of girls,
But my favorite was Mary Jane,
People think it's crazy,
But to me it's sane.

My Imagination

My imagination,
Is to be with a group of girls.
We'll be chillin' in my house,
Maybe on a bed that swirls.
When we're finished, we'll go to the park,
We'll kick back and smoke.
This might have people triggered,
But you know it's a joke.
My imagination,
Is crazy and twisted.
It might make you insane,
Or go ballistic.

School

Eff school, it's BS
They just sit and talk.
It gets me mad,
I'm ready to walk.
They teach us the "White" way,
When nobody knows their traditions.
The Natives don't know their clan,
Or all the missions.
They don't know who Crazy Horse is,
Or Geronimo.
All they know is their tribe,
Pima, Apache, and Navajo.
They have never been to a pow-wow,
Or had a Navajo taco.
All they know is Taco Bell,
And they eat nachos.
They never lived in a Hogan,
Or ever herd sheep.
They only live in houses,
And drive their jeeps.

War

Why is there all this hate?
Soldiers out there dying.
In the battlefield falling,
When the family is at home crying.
It's not only on the battlefield,
It's at home too.
It's in the hoods,
The war between red and blue.
There's races,
Natives against Whites,
There's lots of wars,
Darks against Lights.
There's blood all over the battlefield,
There's people falling.
It's all messed up,
There's people crawling.
But all the sorrow never stops,
Not even the hate.
So I'm going to leave this with God,
And have some fate.

Dear Mama... (To Lisa, My Mom)

Dear Mama,
I love you with all my heart.
You were always there,
We were never apart.
You were always with me,
Through thick and thin.
Remember when we did donuts?
How fast we spin!
If you were out, I would drink a 40 with you,
And smoke a joint.
I still remember the things you taught me,
Like "It's not polite to point".
Now you're in prison,
Doing two and a half years.
I can't wait till you get out,
I'll buy the beers.
We will have the family together,
I'll get Nicky and Eric.
Maybe I'll get Derrick's brother,
Remember Derrick?

all the sorrow never stops,
Not even the hate.

The Beat Within

I hope this scribe finds you all well and in high spirits. I received your magazine a couple of nights ago and wanted to send some good vibes and respect your way for providing our youth and others with a forum in which to be heard. There's no doubt we all have much to say and I was moved beyond tears by the poems and heartfelt reality of the stories. Makes me wish The Beat Within was around when I was pulling time in CYA back in the early '80's.

At any rate you all are doing some good work and even though we all know you can't change unless you want to, it not only gets those that do, pointed in the right direction, it also lets those that don't know somebody gives a damn about them. I'm an old gun slinger out of Sacramento myself, so this all really hits close to home for me.

I've been slammed for some 18 straight years now and though I wear a face of stone it really breaks my heart to see the state of mind of those youngsters walking through them gates day after day. I'm not sure how it is back home but up here in Washington, color has taken a back seat to classism. Anyways, I really don't want to get into all that right now so I'll wrap this one up with a couple of my poems and ask how can I become a regular subscriber to The Beat Within? I'm short on cash but can kick down some postage and poetry from time to time.

Irony Of Fate

Emotions lost on yesterday,
In every way defined,
Where's the ambiguity,
That permeates the lucid mind?

Lost in shattered aspiration,
Things that might have been
And all that's left is paper.
And the magic in this pen.

Letters dance in harmony,
Words commit to thought,
Perhaps even sanity,
In some way can be wrought?

I have no indication,
Of where this road may led,
Nor any inclination
Of where the soul may feed.

I can only close my eyes,
And find myself a dream
And sometimes create inspiration
Lonely as it seems...

CLARK STUHR

There's a term we use around here at the office to keep us motivated in pushing on with this mentally relentless work. We often say that the special words of recognition and gratitude for the work we all do (even you) to make this possible are 'pay-dirt.' We aren't the highest paid people in the world (we're a non-profit organization) when it comes to money, but we are when it comes to being appreciated and feeling like we're needed to offer a positive outlet to those who the rest of us try so hard to forget. Clark is the definition of this 'pay-dirt' and you'll see why when you read his letter. His poetry is outstanding and reflects the struggles he goes through to remain sane under insane conditions. He's writing from the Washington State Penitentiary in Walla Walla, Washington. We'll definitely be looking forward to hearing from him again.

Now the penitentiary is my home,
I'm doing life and I'll do it alone,
I close my eyes, can't look ahead

Dark Fate

A sacrifice into the night,
The victim's cries of dreadful fright
Past the hour of no return,
My fate is sealed my soul will burn,

Now the penitentiary is my home,
I'm doing life and I'll do it alone,
I close my eyes, can't look ahead,
For this is the land of the living dead.

Lost in time and empty space,
It's my life that's been erased
Living by the convict code
A life of concrete, steel, and stone.

There's really nothing left to see
But an evil mask of reality,
But now I see the future and I see it clear,
I see a world of hate and fear.

My quest for freedom can't deny,
I storm the wall and climb for the sky,
The sky was the last thing I saw,
The bullet struck and I started to fall.

"No!" I scream, it can't end this way,
as my soul finds its way,
down into the depths of hell,
among fallen angels I know well...

STEVEN G. AVALOY

One of the most beautiful things about The Beat is that when one discovers it, it usually means a few people discovered it. People pass The Beat to their friends after they're done reading it and that's how The Beat's network grows. This next first time writer was introduced to us by Beat Without writer Dortell Williams and he hits us with a piece we think everyone should read. It explains how the O.G.s never tell us about incarceration or other consequences when they have us mindlessly bustin' moves for them. Everyone needs to know this... Steven G. Avaloy's writing from California State Prison — LAC in Lancaster, CA.

They Never Tell Us

Our big "homies" never tell us about the consequences we'll face in prison nor do they tell us about how we get along with our street enemies. We eat and sleep with them, we become one with them.

They tell us about how to rob, steal, and kill, but they never tell us about the people we are hurting, like our families or the victim's families. We do what the big homies ask us to do just to earn a name for ourselves. If we really want to earn a name for ourselves, we need to put down the guns, pick up a pen and put it down on paper. That is one of the ways we can earn that name and reputation we want. There is a wrong way and a right way to do it, but the choice is ours.

They tell us about how to rob, steal, and kill,
but they never tell us about the people we are
hurting, like our families or the victim's families.

NATHAN THOMAS

We are grateful to be able to have a dialogue that can bring about understanding and really teach us something. We must've misunderstood this next writer at first, but he wrote back and cleared the air for us. In his letter to the 'youthful reader' he poses a great question. Why is it that "being good" feels like betrayal of true self, why like selling out? But he also tells us that this is a question one needs to answer themselves and so we won't give our opinion on the matter. He's writing from Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA, and he's an excellent poet. The three poems that are featured in this issue are deep and contain really positive messages. That's rare in today's world where we spend billions of dollars giving negative messages to our young people through all types of media. We're grateful to hear your words.

I Am (Or, Am I?)

Seize the day! Seize the day, they say.
So I seized it, thinking: okay!
And, behold, it slipped away.
It showed me it had me seized
When it squeezed
And dropped me to my knees
I got taught that I ought not desire
Yet I do as from an ancient fire
So what now can I but laugh that I'm
Caught between lower and higher



Good Times

Yesterday...
'twas a time full of motion and mention:
The bustle banged boldly,
The hours crept coldly;
And now all that was is naught but
memory.

Today...
A day the like never seen before:
This day this world woke
Wearing things never wore,
Speaking things never spoke.

Tomorrow...
The distance beckoning bringing me hope:
For I've time ahead through which I'll go,
Where try and try and try to show
To the end of the line that I'm good to
know.

THE BEAT WITHOUT

Why is it that "being good" feels like betrayal of true self, why like selling out?"

Dear Youthful Reader

I wrote a letter recently to this publication's "youthful reader" and was informed that I may have come across a bit out-of-touch. Now I'll admit that my message is a rather difficult one to understand, but that's not because I'm trying to be intentionally cryptic, instead it's because I'm trying to condense thirty-three years of an evolution of thought and spirit which has, at last, come to bless the struggles and hardships of life rather than rage against them (an acting against the natural necessity of hard choices and hard work — that is, a seeking of the easiest or most fun option at every turn — which set my course for a life locked from my freedom behind concrete walls, sharpshooters, barbed-wire and electric fences, in amid allot of hardcore dudes with hardcore (atti)tudes, the combination of which has a way of seriously countering my natural easy-going inclination for fun); and then the knowledge, the logic, the system of thought that keeps this (my blessing rather than disliking that I am limited to a life in which I must overcome) fresh and alive for me no matter what terrible time I must endure.

This is what I write about: a transformation from a hater of life's limits to a lover of life for the sake of those very same hated limits. And I do this because I know that all actions flow from the inner self out onto the world of things and consequences, so if ever "things and consequences" are to be better, first the inner self must be able to happily work with the way things and consequences operate. But the notion of a "transformation" from a dissatisfied to a beatific state necessitates an understanding of an original disposition that's dissatisfied and that goes contrary to an even more primary original inclination to like and love the way of the world with which we work and wane. Thus, when in my last letter, I asked: "If a young man, caught up in a cycle of carelessness, consequence, rage and regret were to ask himself... why is it that "being good" feels like betrayal of true self, why like selling out?" what I was asking was meant as a question which, being answered not by me but by you to yourself, could shine a light on the fact that something within was terribly out of sync, and so, in need of serious reworking.

That thought is only the beginning. For from the recognition that what's causing your suffering so many terrible consequences is your own and others each seeking connection and satisfaction in defiance of the will of the world to isolate and frustrate every individual from connection and satisfaction, then necessarily comes the question of how, now, to have connection and be satisfied nonetheless. What then will make real this "transformation?" And as answer: One no longer grows angry at the fact that the world mostly doesn't comport to one's wants, but instead contentedly agrees with the way that the nature of necessity necessitates work and work and more work of a concerted and detailed kind in order to make effort effect a maximum return — all to take happiness in the fact of dignity's defiance against whining "poor me," that is, in dignity's refusal not to deign, that is, in dignity's refusal not to get over its unreasonable expectation of perfection, that is, dignity's finding perfection in the fact that the toughness of life is for being bettered by not being made to quit or made a hater, period.

I for one refuse not to deign
Knowing what's life, I'll have at it quite fain.
Here's my deep disposition, its logic, in main:
I shall not bear the devil's stain,
That is, evils won't be for me life's drain.
I'll perfect my talents, knowing to train;
And do this gladly, feeling no strain.

I hope now I've clarified somewhat the message I have to offer. Be aware though that what I write about is of an idealic, a dispositional, a time and place defying nature of spirit and thought, heart and head that words have difficulty attaching to in picture form, that is, in story form, and so can only be discussed abstractly. Now I try to do this as clearly and concisely as is possible; but if I fail in that, be sure, it's not for lack of desire. But with criticism and experimentation I feel I will eventually be able to make my intention and my invention weld together well.

Redemption

I was born in pain and desolation
 This chill air stung my skin
 I cried for the shock of drawing it in;
 I felt the loss of my home till then.
 But I was put in clothes, and warmed;
 Nestled next to the heat of the heart
 And charmed!
 Those first moments could tell the tale:
 I anger at wrong, and love when goes well.
 But as I grew I was angry a lot;
 For this whole system in which I'm caught
 Proved to me I needed to fight
 (Nothing about it was "right")
 Thus my mind was terribly troubled,
 Not knowing what to do
 Not a thing in all the world
 Inspired my heart to pursue.
 So, being confused, I did what I abused.
 O how I begged the sky to show me the way!
 But I perceived no answer
 Either night or day.
 What guide, then, had I but my feelings within?
 None I could find, so good feeling
 Became my end
 Though the thing about feelings, and
 The nature of things
 Is all goods turn to bads
 And that surely stings.
 Turn bad luck to good, then
 That's what we do.
 True. Yet goods lose to bads
 At least one to two
 Thus as I grew, contempt and disgust, too
 I threw in my brew
 I knew not how to trust from any view.
 That, though, wasn't what I really wanted
 Good times and good climes
 Are all I ever hunted
 And angry at the world
 For working against my want,
 I turned on it a violent front
 Thus the same old story ensued:
 A perpetual spiral of anger continued
 But that recoiled against me
 Many a painful penalty...
 'Till finally, it dawned on me:

I couldn't win by fighting angrily.
 I had to find how to be glad
 That the world attacks against me;
 I had to re-cast this from cause to hate
 To reason to take
 Each moment with glee.
 The very things I did abhor
 I had to learn how to adore
 My mission was to find the key
 To the mystery of the history
 Of my rebellion...
 So to unlock the door
 And a sense of rightness rose ever around;
 The whole state of Nature spoke a new sound:
 Seek, young man, how to make into friend
 Dependence, Demand, and Destruction...
 As the making of these your good is creation
 Of new heaven and earth by redemption
 So I led down to see what I'd see
 And there I beheld Nature's bounty
 And majesty
 Then I asked myself: did that redeem death?
 And the answer was: NO!
 As I choked on my breath
 Mere passive observance and awe at all things
 Wont work to make me love-'cause
 All these work to kill my feelings
 To simply see thus doesn't show loving kindness;
 But something else must
 Would my world be made to goodness
 Then suddenly it cleared for me
 The essence of my strength's to show
 My excellence to my dignity
 Here's my good! That I have the chance
 To prove!
 To myself, and all else, that mind
 Is a mighty love
 This is how I know now the strength
 Of the love of my God;
 I'm no longer a mere nothing simply passing
 Under the almighty trod
 I've turned Dependence, Demand, and Destruction
 Into the means of salvation-that
 Through these I burn and am able to earn
 My overcoming to sanctification.

CYA, jails, street life, prison I ain't happy 'cause this ain't living

JOHNNIE MICHAELS One of the reasons why we stress the importance of The Beat, and furthermore, the importance of being able to document our own histories is because of pieces like this next one. While "in his cell wishin' he was free," and going through many other things in his life like losing his mother in the distant past, he still finds time to offer inspiration to our younger readers. He lets them know that it's cool to slow down and be precise with the steps they take in life. He writes a little about the California Youth Authority and one of its institutions — N.A. Chaderjian. But right now he finds himself in Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA. This poem was an inspiration to us because we know it'll be inspiration to the rest of you.

Rise Up And Stand Up

In my cell wishin' I was free
 Hours of nothing but loneliness
 Clouds is a cold reality
 Lost my mama to the streets years ago
 Unanswered questions I'll never know
 CYA, jails, street life, prison
 I ain't happy 'cause this ain't living
 Relationships start off good, but ends bad

seven years in CYA, five in that hell called (Chad)
 I want to do good, being a thug is all I know.
 Maybe this why I'm destined for death row.

I ain't bragging nor am I proud
 Hey this just the way it is—
 Visions of being Magic Johnson as a kid
 Miss my freedom and my beautiful woman wit' a passion
 Life is so hard to explain, I blame self
 For the messed up predicament I am in.
 I will do better in time, 'cause change gone come
 To all the youths out there livin' it up
 The hyphy movement is cool. But prison is not fun

Slow down young brothas and sistas
 Before you make a big mistake
 Everyday someone hangs in a place like this
 This real talk, they just don't report it to the media
 Every bed they fill, cops get paid grands
 Time is now to wise up, get up and stand up
 Become a woman and man...

CECIL WEST Being trapped in one's misery is an awful feeling. For when we're trapped in our misery, it just seems endless. The more time we spend mulling it over, the more reasons we can come up with for being miserable and the more reasons we can come up with for being miserable, the more time we spend mulling it over. So it really is a trap that only gets worse the longer we keep ourselves there. He gives us the history of what has made him feel like he's trapped in misery and we can tell he's experienced many hardships and struggles — especially within his own family. He's writing from the Columbia Correctional Institution in Lake City, Florida and has always been a heavy hitting force for The Beat, so let's pay our respects and keep an attentive eye on his work.

I went back to her and removed
The syringe whispering
The madness has
Ended thinking of her kids
Now they must suffer cause

Trapped In My Misery

Trapped in my misery from
The past...memories that's
Extremely sad. In a world
Full of strife...this epic
Poem is about my life, take
You back to the nineteen
Seventies...when I was
Six going on seven. My grand-
Mother struggled to make ends
Meet...knowing she had four
Mouths to feed, working as a
Maid...back when African
Americans was fighting slavery.
I was the only son...my
Mother and father left me
All alone. Soon after my grand-
Father died...many nights I've
Watched t ears pour from my
Grandmother's eyes, praying
To our lord and savior...
That us kids would see
Better days we grew up
On government checks and
Money...cause we was
Always short on money. Sugar
Water became our favorite
Cause we couldn't afford
Kool-aid. As I grew older...
Life became even colder!
With all the corruption and
Hate in men's hearts
My grandmother continued
To pray to the almighty God
She would always smile when
I dance applauding me clapping
Her hands, so I danced
All the time to hide the
Pain and misery deep inside
At the age of twelve drugs
Took my beautiful sister Bell
Leaving me extremely sad
I thought of the pimp who
Turned her to drugs
A brother who she truly
Loved. One day when she came
Home I found her in the
Back room all alone with
A syringe in her arm in
My heart I could feel a
Storm as I stood with
Tears running down my
Cheeks stirring emotions
That ran extremely deep
I could tell she was dead
Cause of the way she held
Her head I called her
Name softly only to
Find my voice last on deaf
Ears tasting the salt
On my lips from silent
Tears one day they'll pay
I heard myself saying I
Then turned and went to the
Phone dialing 911 as my
Heart was full of loneliness
I went back to her and removed

The syringe whispering
The madness has
Ended thinking of her kids
Now they must suffer cause
Of the lifestyle she lived
My beautiful nephew and
Nieces I sat down and
Waited for the police I
Thought of all the times me
And my beloved sister shared
As I cried whispering I
Cared while all these thoughts
Flashed through my head
It was hard for me to believe
That my beautiful sister
Was dead me and my other
Sister was never close
Cause she molested me
When I was a little boy
So I decided to leave home
As I thought of my dead
Sister feeling so alone
Three days later I stood
Besides her grave making
A promise that all drug dealers
And pimps would pay
And they would pay in blood
Cause they'd taken the only
Person I truly loved I
Started conditioning myself
For the street every time
You seen me I was
Packing the heat I didn't
Use drugs at the time
But I was living a life
Of crime. I was my grand-
Mother's favorite she didn't
Want me to end up like
My sister in a cold lonely
Grave, so she begged me
To come home not knowing
What my other sister
Had done. I wasn't gonna
Add to her heartache and
Pain at the age of thirteen
I was a full grown man
Doing what I must
To survive at times
It was a struggle for me
To stay alive. I visited
My family from time to
Time revenge was the
Only thing on my mind
It was as if I was in a daze thinking of
My beloved sister in that
Cold lonely grave. Hustling
The streets revenge
Becoming a part of my
Dreams in and out of
Detention centers and jails
Soon to find myself in a
Prison cell! It was a part
Of my conditioning to endure
Revenge the only cure I
Went to school in every facility
Living a cold world my only
Reality. At the age of 19

I moved out of Vero Beach
And street people became my
Teachers I moved to Melbourne
Florida hustling the streets
Stacking big dollars. Destroying
Any drug dealer or pimps along
The way without realizing
It, I was becoming a slave
To the game. Been shot, stabbed,
And been in some bloody fights
Always for what I considered
Was right. Ran them streets
For days at a time avenging
The death of my beloved sister
Strong in my mind. Looking
Out for addicts and homeless
People they've even done
Things for me. In one way
Or another what we shared
Had nothing to do with skin
Color! I started praying
To the almighty God cause
Of the turmoil of emotions
Deep within my heart. As I
Kneel down beside the ocean
In the early morning hours
I prayed to God asking
Him to give me power. to
Protect those who couldn't
Protect themselves in this
Cold world women, men,
Boys, and girls. Many times
I've found myself crying
Cause of the misery and
Pain deep inside. After
Being up for days with
Visions of my beloved
Sister's face. As time passed
Me by the rage continued
To burn like fire
I destroyed many pimps
And drugs dealers was
Once labeled as a cold
Hearted killer! Some even
Called me player craving
For drugs, money, and
Material things. Living the
Lifestyle of a hustling
Thugs showing addicts
And homeless people nothing
But love, never getting close
To no one a wanderer
Without a home. Loving
Street people for a fact
They gave me love and I
Gave it back. Walking the
face of this earth... avenging
angel from the day of my birth
it's a lonely life beyond
measure sometimes
I think I've been a failure
Realizing I've becoming Satan's
Toy becoming what I set
Out to destroy now as I
Lay here waiting to be delivered
I'm a lonely man trapped in my
misery!

THE 21 YEAR RULE COMMENTARY:

Over-crowding within the California prison system has caused two debilitating conditions within the financial stability of the state of California.

1. Corrosive fragmentation to social cohesion within the state due to an inordinate amount of the state's fiscal budget being designated to maintain the continually growing prison system.

Inequitable distribution of fiscal funds toward social programs within the state will continue to manifest deleterious effects upon the social cohesion of the state. The financial strength of California is created from commerce, the quality of its infrastructure and the social welfare of its citizens. The continually growing prison population and subsequently growing prison operations fiscal budget will continually suppress and enfeeble the states social cohesion. The social and financial welfare of California citizens is the states greatest asset. The highly diminished availability of general public resources are directly related to the cost of the continually growing prison population. The established standard of living for California's working class citizen will continue to decline in direct proportion with the continual increase in the prison population and prison operations fiscal budget.

2. The creation of welfare dependency. There are an estimated 20-30 thousand prisoners who are serving disparate life term sentences who have been incarcerated for over 21 successive years.

This category of prisoners (a considerable amount of them have already served over 25 years of successive incarceration) are now nearly 50 years old and older, and are obviously a mere 10 years away from senior citizen status. The continued confinement of this category of prisoners will relegate them to state welfare dependency as their primary source of financial income upon their eventual release on parole.

It does not serve human welfare or public welfare nor does it safeguard the general public by excessively confining a person to the point of sapping their functioning ability to compete in the work force and provide a respectable living for themselves. This category of prisoners must be evaluated to determine their parole suitability in order to divert a future sudden and rapid increase to the already over-burdened state welfare dependency program.

A tenable remedy to relieve prison over-crowding: within the state of California the legal and social standard of human maturity has been recognized at the age of 21 years of age. Within this ideal the concept of "reaching" an adult life stage has been generally accepted, and here too the concept of 21 years being literally interpreted as a lifetime, has foundation and substance.

There are a considerable number of prisoners confined within the state of California who's commitment offense and subsequent confinement occurred before their chronological age of 21 years of age, and who thereafter have now served 21 or more successive years of incarceration.

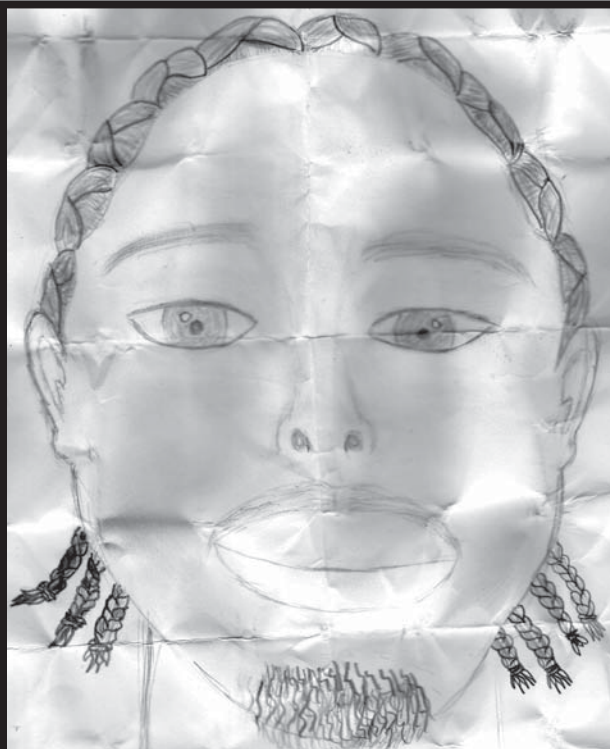
This category of prisoners must be thoroughly evaluated to determine their parole suitability for release as a "tenable first step remedy to addressing the perilous condition of prison over-crowding in California."

California prisoners who have served 21 years of successive confinement have not been justly considered as a first step in addressing the problem nor have they been afforded the (equivalent) of a life time reached through successive years of confinement and as requital for conviction of a crime. The 21 year rule is socially, morally and legally tenable as the standard equivalent of a "life time/ sentence" complete under incarceration.

Carefully documented statistical data and facts must not be ignored in addressing over-crowding within the prison system. Recidivism data recorded and compiled over decades unequivocally demonstrates that prisoners who have been released after serving a prolonged prison confinement "rarely return to the penal system upon parole release."

The 21 year Rule Mandate is a remedy to relieve over-crowding within the California prison system. The category of prisoners recounted above are now "middle aged human beings and are subject to a mortal future." This category of prisoners must be chiefly evaluated as the first step remedy toward relieving over-crowding in California's prison system.

BRUCE ALLEN We believe our opinions become more credible when we show passion and have first hand examples to back our passion up. These next two pieces are written by a man who's pushing for change within the system he's a prisoner of. Like out here, laws and the people in power, govern those that are incarcerated, however it's done in a more disconnected way — due to the fact that we're taught to see those who are locked up as 'less than' human. The particular law he's speaking of is the 21 rule where he feels you shouldn't do more than 21 years on a life sentence. He's writing from Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA, so he's seeing the conditions of the system every day and speaking out about it. Not only does that take a lot of courage, but it also takes intelligence. We are grateful to be informed by Bruce Allen and we're sure you will be too.



Memorandum

This proposal was written to contribute to the noble effort that is being made by prison reform activist to bring about equitable prison reform with the state of California.

The 21 year rule is a feasible and realistic remedy to relieve prison over-crowding and address the warranted parole of thousands of prisoners serving sentences of "Life" imprisonment (i.e. prisoners serving sentences of life without possibility of parole; 25 years to life; 15 years to life; 7 years to life; etc.) who have been incarcerated for 21 or more successive years and who are suitable for release on parole.

I encourage all prison reform activist to objectively discuss the social and moral imperatives cabined within the 21 year rule toward actuating a fair adjustment in parole reform/prison reform.

I encourage all prison reform activist to introduce and promote the 21 year rule among the California State Legislature with a determined effort to secure legislate support and ratification of the 21 year rule mandate. The proposal has substance, feasibility and demonstrates a clear direction.

I am a California prisoner serving a sentence of life without possibility of parole. I have been incarcerated since July 1981.

On behalf of all life term prisoners incarcerated within the state of California: thank you for your support, energy, effort, determination and compassion. You all are sincerely appreciated.

KELLY WATTS

Writing from the Potosi Correctional Center in Mineral Point, Missouri, we give you a man who's full of wisdom and insight. This week he hits us with five incredible pieces. Two of them are obviously to the one he loves on the outside and the other three are his lessons on life. In one piece, "The Challenge Of Difficulty," he's basically saying that how we handle difficulty in our lives usually defines the kind of person we are. We need to learn how to make lemonade when life throws us something as bitter as lemons. And in getting over what's difficult in our lives, there's no rush for if we rush through it, we won't fully appreciate what's on the other side — a learning experience. What a great perspective to share with us. We are awaiting more very impatiently. If his words are food for thought, then he needs to feed us some more because we're hungry for ideas such as the ones coming out of that brilliant mind. Thank you for your insight...

Confessions Of A Dream

The golden light held for a few moments longer and then, as if a curtain had been suddenly lowered, vanished as the sun sank beneath the clouds on the horizon.

The lonely prisoner took one final peek at that fiery orange-red hue shinning mirrors of warmth and sadness in his receptive tear glazed eyes. Darkness settled, and, as if drawn by the same force that had brought the radiant light to Potosi's Correctional Center. The loud speaker erupted as in a resounding nightmare from the prisons guard tower, "Yard is closed, yard is closed, return to your cell."

Returning to his 8x10 cell, an inhumane hell, with concrete blocks, and wrought and locks. He sat upon his bed filled with heartache and dread, his mind going through a rolodex of thoughts in search of memories that have not yet been cooled by the passage of time. Lights off, he lays back, arms folded across his chest and closes his eyes. He centers himself, his heartbeat, and his breathing, with hopes of one day leaving. His mind takes him away briefly from prisons degenerating circumstances back to a time when joy and laughter filled the air, to a childhood memory, a play ground without care. But his dream becomes troubled and won't keep him there. He took a wrong turn on that very night ended up doing Twenty-Five-To-Life. Waiting by the distance rolling with time, he murmured in sleep, what happened to those fiends of mine. His girlfriend's love has him feeling sad and blue, just like his friends she has abandoned him too. He stirs in his nap, alone and trapped, wishing on the stars behind prisons bars.

Struggling with emotions filled with heartache and pains, wondering if his life will ever change. Wishing on a dream leaving out the precious things cause yesterdays love is gone in the wind, gone in the rain.

Three hundred sixty-five days in a year he has shed a many of tears. Not once has a single letter come his way to give him hope for this very day. Each and everyday he experiences a sadness that diminishes his hope and fills him with madness.

Withered by solitude, and frailed by aloneness, he pays the ultimate price but there's no one to witness his atonement.

Where does a broken heart go when you're on the down low. Having the prison blues constantly searching for clues, please tell me if you know.

How can you mend a shattered heart, where do I start, when she has the other part.

As he dreams with bitter memories as a testament to his fate. Maybe someday he'll get close to freedom's gate.

His girlfriend's love has him feeling sad and blue, just like his friends she has abandoned him too. He stirs in his nap, alone and trapped, wishing on the stars behind prisons bars.

How Deep Is Your Love

Time after time obstacles get in the way.
 But only you can assure me your love is here to stay.
 I know sometimes things seems to just go wrong,
 But your love is what heals and helps me to be strong.
 And to this end I come to love you more each day and
 carry on,

By chance I can receive a letter or hear your voice on
 the phone.

Life wouldn't be the same without your love,
 This is why I'm asking, "How deep is your love?"
 Sometimes my days seem long and my nights seem
 short,

This is only because I'm missing our loved filled heart.
 Although I can't hold you in my arms because we are
 apart,

But remember baby that this doesn't mean I cant hold
 you in my heart. I'll give my world to see you smile,
 Perhaps I'll see it in just a little while.

I adore you my phantom queen,

For all these things to me you mean.

I pray to God that your love for me gets stronger,

I don't think I can do this time much longer.

All I can think about is the day when I can hold you,
 squeeze you,

Tease you, and do all the things you want me to do.

And if you would allow me to,

I would love to go ever-deeper by marrying you.

Just remember these words are coming from my heart.

And when this is over we will never be apart.

You see, I know that God will send you to me

To share in each other's love.

This is one reason I wonder, "How deep is your love?"



Two Hearts

Two hearts that come together as one
 Can endure the pains of life and have much fun.
 Sometimes separated, far, far, away,
 Yet you remain in my thoughts each and every moment
 of the day.

I cry and yearn for my eventual return,
 Can't sleep at night cause I toss and turn.

I keep you daily vividly in my mind
 Because I believe the love we share is one of a kind.

I'll even stand by you like a tree
 And dare a soul to try and move me.
 And though you are but a figment of my imagination,
 Dreaming of you is my ardent elation.

So cherish these words for they are yours to keep.
 For in my heart you are a big and lasting part of me.
 Ssshhh! May I see you soon.

The Challenge Of Difficulty

All of us from time to time experience some difficulty in our lives. I won't say the challenges of difficulties in my life experiences, (in scope or in magnitude) are any different than anyone else's. Which is why, when asked how I'm doing, my response is "better than some, worse than others."

I believe how we meet difficulties and obstacles in our lives will determine the course of our lives. I often ask myself what spirit of freedom, compassion, or understanding might I discover in the midst of my difficulties?

I've learned that in each and every aspect of life, the chance to spin straw into gold is within our ability. All that is required of this is our respectful attention, and our willingness to learn from difficulty. Instead of - fighting, when we see with the eyes of wisdom, difficulties can become our good fortune. When we have some difficulty with some aspect of our relationship with our soul mate, children, or others, we may inquire how we treat that part of ourselves. I learned some time ago that if you come to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on. Difficulties often lead us to the very thing we may need to learn. I am of the mind that whatever difficulties or troubles encountered by us, are always provided by a solution, a way out, a relief, and a way leading to ease and happiness. To know the character of a man is not to know where he stands in time of comfort and convenience, but where he stands in time of trial and controversy. When faced with a problem or confronted with a difficult challenge, get creative. We must not allow ourselves to focus on the difficulty of our situation, whatever that situation may be. Instead we should become enthusiastic about the creative possibilities. Don't be stopped by anyone who say it can't be done. History is filled with examples of people who have used creativity to turn negative situations into positive lives filled with value.

There are many things that can hold us back as long as we continue to hold on to them. Each day is filled with plenty of reasons to be angry, resentful, frustrated, offended, and annoyed. But all of that negativity can render us cold, unfeeling, and unproductive if we allow for it to take control of our life.

So we must make the choice and let it go and free ourselves as we soar above it all. We can also learn to rise up with vision and understanding that will enable us to move ahead. Sometimes to move ahead faster is to take our time. When we're relentlessly pushing ourselves, the pushing becomes our focus, and we may lose our vision. We can lose sight of our true object; thus creating a more difficult situation for ourselves.

When we are busy being constantly busy, it can be easy to forget what we seek to accomplish. Rushing through a task can burn us out and create mistakes that we'll have to spend more time fixing. We must keep in mind that sprinting is not a sure and ideal way for winning a marathon. Slowing down and pacing yourself could yield better and faster results. Remember our goal is not simply to be busy, but to accomplish something of value with our efforts. Let us take a deep breath, reflect a moment, and concentrate on where we are going. There is power in moving thoughtfully and deliberately. Time and steady persistence will achieve much more than frantic, hurried turmoil. Go fast enough to make a difference with positive results, yet slow enough as to see the results come to fruition.

Time and steady persistence will achieve much more than frantic, hurried turmoil. Go fast enough to make a difference with positive results, yet slow enough as to see the results come to fruition.

Give Thanks

We should be thankful for each and everyday as they provide us with another chance at life and another dream to fulfill. Our life is as an open book replete with happiness and joy, sorrow and pain, laughter and misery. Yet should we be thankful for the trials and tribulations that come our way because they help us to recognize our strengths. Our triumphs and defeats in life are the bridges we must sometimes travel to reach our full potential, our higher and fuller life. I have learned that each small act of kindness fills the heart and spirit with thankfulness. Even words of hope when they are needed may give promise for that one day. The remembrance of a birthday, a compliment that engenders a smile - is felt across great distances and spans of time, affecting lives unknown and in the most unlikely places. And in whose generous spirit, is found the source of this good echo, because kindness is passed on and grows each time it passes, until a simple courtesy becomes an act of selfless courage years later and far away.

I believe if we just take the time to ponder the little things we'll discover so much to be thankful for. If you apply a magnifying glass to a patch of grass it would open up a new world of adventure for a child's curious mind. For the little things are all worthwhile, a thought, a deed, a cheerful smile. Even though those things may seem so small, those are the things that mean most of all. So pick one of the many moments that make up this day, and set it aside for something truly special. Take that one moment, and make it the best you can imagine and you will discover much to be thankful for. Think of all you've learned, and imagine what you can do with that knowledge. Consider all you've done in the past year, and imagine what you'll be able to do. You're now in a better position to imagine the very best, and what you can imagine will lead to what you can be thankful for. In your one special moment today, let go of anger, fear, resentment and sorrow. Fill that moment with hope, love, beauty, and joy. Understand in that moment, that all you could ever need or want is already made available to you. Where there is nothing, there is room for everything. When all is lost, there is no limit to what can be gained.

When the world seems dark, cold, and empty, there is plenty to be thankful for. You are now in a position to fill it with warmth, with light, with meaning, and with life. Being thankful in your thoughts and words is a good starting point. Yet the real power of gratitude comes when you put it into action. By making the most of the good things you have. When you hoard and hide away your blessings, they soon wither and die. When, on the other hand, you put them to use, the good things in your life grow and multiply. It is truly a blessing that dreams do not instantly come true, because if your dreams were to immediately be fulfilled, you would never have the pleasure of being thankful for them. The anticipation of an achievement is an important part of the value of that achievement. When life serves you lemons be thankful and make lemonade.

Our triumphs and defeats in life are the bridges we must sometimes travel to reach our full potential, our higher and fuller life

BROTHA ACHIM We love when this next writer sends us something because every time we read his writing he takes us on a journey through his values and beliefs. This week he breaks his thoughts on the 'n' word all the way down for us. He gives us what he views as both sides of the argument — the African-Americans who are disgusted when other African-Americans use the word vs. the African-Americans who use that word on a daily basis. He makes some really great points for both sides and then comes to his own conclusion at the end. The use of this word, for some, could make you want to cringe, while for others it comprises most of their vocabulary. Maybe the younger generation needs to appreciate what those before them went through in order to combat being called that word. Or maybe the older generation needs to understand that the youngsters use that word because it doesn't hold the same meaning to them anymore. Whatever the case, some understanding needs to happen in order to come together and see a bigger picture. It's almost similar to the 'b' word where women are using it towards each other, yet it's still not cool for men to use it towards them. They're taking the meaning out of the word by using it to mean the opposite, yet when a man uses it, it means the same demeaning thing it meant in the first place, so it's not cool. That's easy enough to understand. Well, if you don't know already, this wise writer is writing from California State Prison in Soledad, CA.

The "N" Word

A most profound sounding word when spoken cross-racial, in anger, and in its entirety. So alarmingly abhorrently-repugnant to many that the general media will only print or speak this word with abbreviated from(s) to avoid offending its readers/listeners. The history of this word is well known to those who oppose its continued usage and Blacks who continuously use this word are now being ostracized, targeted for censorship, condemnation and reeducation.

Undeniably, historically this word used by primitives, savage whites with this country represented the absolutes most odious, unconscionable-incomprehensive pathological from of racial oppression and cancerous ignorance with history. Nevertheless, and not with studies all the painful memories of the holocaust that the African nation has had to suffer and still enduring — it simply does not explain the neurotic, paranoia, and near psychosis of 21st century blacks who adamantly condemn and vehemently oppose (any version) usage of this word by blacks towards other blacks. Needless to say we are not a monolithic people and our beliefs and understanding are as varied as our skin colors.

Unquestionably and indisputably all decent murdered, morally intent individuals would oppose the usage of this word by non blacks directed at blacks.

This writer is neither "pro" or "con" to the "n" word usage. Albeit, as a black man if a non black were to call me the n-word, violence would most assuredly ensue and not necessarily so if another black were to do similarly so. This obvious double standard is called tolerance. Blacks do naturally and should as all other races have more tolerance towards each other than they would towards another race. This is fortunately or unfortunately an innate aspect of our humanity. While at first glance this may appear discriminately, but more realistic and accurately put it is called tolerance.

The Anglo-judicial system is a classic example of this disparate in treatment. Statistics upon statistics have revealed discrimination across the board — white judges are more lenient and tolerant towards white defendants than they are towards non-whites.

Probably to the bourgeois black intellect, this double standard makes their "con" argument. As to the danger, harm and negativity of blacks continued usage of this nefarious word towards each other. Pointing out: I). The usage of this word by non blacks towards blacks towards blacks by non blacks. II.) It's continued wholesale usage may promote anew the usage of this word towards blacks by non blacks. That it may indicate that it is now ok, chic, and en vogue to only again use this somewhat abandoned, near forbidden word.

Those examples of prophesy do support the "con" argument, but constraint as a means of restraint is a form of cowardice, a surrender to a seemingly insurmountable problem. Logic and intelligence dictates that the word isn't the problem, it is the history of the monsters who coined this word.

In the atypical American mentality of easy and instant solution. Conservative, middle class blacks would have "us" believe that by blacks eradicating this word out of their vocabulary usage, it will somewhat or somehow with effect eliminate the cancerous scourge of hatred within the hearts and minds of racist white Americans against new Africans — even black intraracism. I'm sure those blacks who oppose the usage of this word would have an even more comprehensive rationalization for the cessation and condemnation of its usage by blacks.

I confess to having used the "n" word causally and in anger, having also witnessed other blacks usage of this word as the repetitions centerpiece and focal point of their discourse, ad nauseam-ad absurdum.

Needlessly to say I was annoyed at limited vocabulary and vacuous repetitiveness of this word, especially in a mixed company, even feeling a tinge of embarrassment. Having witnessed this so-called faux pas and observed the disquieting disquiet by some blacks and non-blacks. I, not unlike others usually discount the speaker as ignorant and conclude he or she is unworthy of any further consideration or interest.

The "pro" argument is as persuasive as the "con" argument is against — a vast assortment of rationalizations. Basically, those blacks who are addicted to the "n" word usage contend first and foremost: 1). It is their right to use the n-word or any other that they choose to use. 2). Their usage is in most instances harmless and with many instances a term of endearment. 3). They aren't racist against blacks, nor do they harbor any ill will towards blacks. And more pointedly 4). Their multiple variation of change in dialect — usage has divorced this word from its original, hateful, evil, ugly intent. That sometimes with the life of a word, its meaning changes — even to its opposite. Adding: 5). That there usage is utilitarian, and exclamation and even playful. Seldom of even their usage of the "n" word the cause of violence or hatred. Suggestive that the opposition need let go of the past, forgive, and evolve and move on.

Notwithstanding my prior comment, when I genuinely listen to those blacks who have a proliferas usage of this word, who appear to almost have it ingrained with their psyche, a somewhat exclamation of the first order. When hearing this word spoken from those blacks I have sometimes felt their A). anger, B). frustration with America's cancerous racism, C). Bravo-machismo, D). symbol of unity and E) that they were just clowning and kidding around, etc. In passing I have never felt intra-racism coming from one black towards another.

The "pro" and "con" arguments are equally postured and both representing legitimate and reasons held belief. This isn't a debate of right vs. wrong, rather right vs. ultimate right and this is where this debate empties into... in my opinion inter alias

1. The "pro" position is one of individual liberty with grave political indictment against the new African nation that "we" not unlike our forefathers have failed miserably in bringing this white vs. black race war to a just conclusion.

2.the "con" position is one of contemporary moral ethics, respect, cosmetics, and image building.

Logic, intelligence, and maturity dictates that a word is just a word, a powerless, blameless entity, a simple configuration of recognized alphabets. As noted before, we are not a monolithic people, there are black republican, atheist, Muslims, gays, hypocrites, uncle Toms, etc. Even more so, there are some blacks especially young ones who claim that they have never been the victim of white racism. Therefore, the "n" word has no history of negative connotation of painful psychological memories.

Here lies the crux of this debate. One side sees dangers and the other side does not — a paradigm of perception. The oppositions general criticism of those who use this word is that they are simply being grossly insensitive to the feeling of those who aggrieved by their usage of this word — ignorant and ignoring the painful history of the evil ramification of the n-word. Conversely, the other sides counter criticism is that those blacks who criticize their usage of this word are just bourgeois, pseudo alarmist, who are not in touch with contemporary reality that what is evil is more or less their conscience bothering them, guilt.

My criticism and counsel to those blacks who have an excessive use of the "n" word is, you're annoying, continue to educate yourself, travel and get over your limited vocabulary.

My criticism and counsel to those blacks, especially the likes of Bill Cosby, grow up, you don't own the new African nation: we are many, complexed, diversified and multifaceted. We are a first people, the original people, the strong, personification of a survivor, the crème de la crème. Cosby need to be mindful that he acquired his wealth as a stepping, fetching buffoon for whites.

In no uncertain terms of the 21st century blacks do not need protection from a jaded, obsolete, antiquated word. My advice to those blacks aggrieved and truly concerned is that they need concentrate their frustration, anger, resources/energies on addressing/solving the vast assortments of ills that the "n" word does and once represented. What isn't needed is a cosmetic, superficial, finger in the damn, victim reeducation program of how to be a better victim and to suffer in silence.

Simply because you do not want to be embarrassed. Well, continued on next page

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shame is good, it serves a purpose. Just maybe if our African nation is shamed enough we will stand up and bring this five hundred year race war to a just conclusion.

The "n" word is the extract descendent of the "r" word (racism). It is puerile and moral cowardice of the first degree for 21st century black bourgeois with intellect to engage in an abjectly pathetic debate of reeducation and condemnation of those blacks for their usage of the "n" word. When the true cancer, the true case of the "n" word is the "r" word. The true energy of new Africans in America is alive and well and has often all these centuries, not yet been soundly addressed and attacked. This neo-reeducation and condemnation campaign is a traitorous smokescreen to divert attention away from black leadership and blacks in general, strategy-less, complete failure with this multi century old war against racism in America.

In many respect "we" all owe those Africans whose prolific usage of the "n" word in mixed company and in their music our gratitude. For they have caused a resurgent in intellectual debate of blackness and black consciousness of self esteem. Each and every time the "n" word is used, it need be a renewed opportunity of awakening and reminder to both blacks and non blacks that there is yet an unresolved problem of diseased cataclysmic magnitude in America. All is not right, all is not well and we are not all ok.

It appears as if it is the instinctive intuitiveness, almost mystically driven need of many blacks to raise the "n" word up until the "r" word falls.

STEPHON WILLIAMS

For some, it's our biggest fear to get locked up and then something happen to our loved ones. It's a fear because there's isn't another more helpless feeling than getting a letter or talking on the phone and hearing news like, "I hate to tell you, but so and so passed away," or "Dear John, we're writing to let you know so and so just died." In a place where they spend billions of dollars to make sure you don't leave, there's nothing worse than yearning to have a last moment with someone you love. And what's worse is that sometimes we don't find out for years on end because our loved ones don't want to anger us and potentially tell us something that may give us the attitude to care about catching time. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. We hope you can keep your head up. We know it's hard in that situation, but there will definitely be brighter days.

Dear Beat Within

I thought that I would share my thoughts with your young readers once again. This is a story about a young man (my nephew) "Jabari Antwan Holmes" who on October 4th, 2004 passed away. I myself did not find out about it until two years later! Because his mother Bernice, and his sister Nicole Manning did not want me to get into anymore trouble than I was already in — very considerate I would say.

After being down for over nine years, nobody wrote to me! I was used to not hearing from anyone. But there was this one guy from my area I asked him to take home a note to my nephew... he did, my nephew wrote back after a while. You youngsters don't understand what it would mean to your relatives who's been in prison over a matter of time. I got his letter and it brought a BIG smile to my face, and made my chest swell up with great pride.

Let me share with you his last short letter he sent to me before his timely end. "Going time, 55: Butch, this is your nephew Bari... what's up ninja? It's been a long time since I hit you. Been kind of tied down, but the little homie C.J. hooked me up with the get down, (CDC# & address). Now that I got it, I'ma be at you! I hear that you still representing 55th ya' dig — for life ya' mean! I'm out here its the same ain't nothing changed, but the days. Everybody is OK, Nikki's at Berkeley High — 9th grade. Me, still music, light in my system... keeping my momma stable. I'm a hit you back real soon, for real, I aint faking!

Jabari Holmes

That was the last time I heard anything from him. I tell you all that this news of his death nearly broke my heart. I, a grown man, cried for two days! Even after somebody told me that this kind of behavior was not me! He, of course, was right... but how could I not grieve over the lost of this young man. When he was a BIG part of my life as much as I was to his. Now this is the letter that really pumped up my chest

America must never be allowed to renege upon its promise/ guarantees of equality and justice for all. Therefore, it is the intolerable, never ending duty of all new African blacks to declare war to the utmost in this crusade to ensure that while Americans live up to its promise of freedom, equality and justice from oppression and discrimination for all its citizens, voluntary and involuntary ones and in the end: liberation/reparation/ independence and separation with the establishment of the provisional government — republic of new Africa.

In parting, despite the anticipated sanctimonious outcry of disagreement to this action there is no universal right or wrong, as experience and the horrors of history clearly detail. Ultimately, right is whatever the individual says it to be and is able to impose upon others. In this instance and individual has the right to use whatever word(s) he or she chooses to use. Those who do not approve have the right to include our force to the other to cease and desist usage... failing that the aggrieved party simply have the right not to listen and/or to attempt to change the conditions that causes the usage of this objectionable word.

While a server painful annoyance to some, this debate in the face of "our" unresolved cowardly unilateral surrender in this centuries old race war without honor or restitution is insidiously dishonorable — and this debate a cowardly diversion.

the most... not about the death! But from the news of just how good she's doing!

Dear, Uncle Stephon:

Hello uncle, how have you been? (ain't that sweet) Me, I been cool out here doing what I do best — work and school. I'll be 18 on September 6, so happy birthday to me. I have some bad news to tell you, please dot get mad and do something crazy. What I am about to tell you is really going to break your heart. Jabari Antwan Holmes passed away on October 4th, of 2004. Due to suffocation I really don't know what happened, he was outside with one of his every blue-moon friends, and we (me and mom's) came outside and he was laying on the side of the house laid out. The young man (his friend) said that they were play fighting and he (Jabari) fell. But she (Nikki) really didn't believe that...(neither do I!) When they got him to the hospital, they said death by strangulation! (To the throat.)

My neice said that the dude isn't locked up! She said she really didn't want to tell me, but she knew it would hurt me more if she didn't. So she just thought she'd write.

(Back to the letter) but other than this (this bad news,) mom's (Bernice) she's been holding on, but she's been back and forth to the hospital for four months. But she's trying to pull it through. As for me, I've been keeping my head up, doing what I have to do to live big (ya' know!) Toni is doing fine, she's re-married to a pastor, and has another kid-that's two. Tenica has four kids and she just bought a house. So everyone's doing fine. But as for Chorlette! She still messing with dude. They married but trick her! Feel me. So sorry for that bad news, I would love to continue to write you... so if you would please write me back I would really appreciate it.

P.S. Once you send me ya' letter I will send you a picture of me and mom's and the rest of the fam-bam

Love, Nicole Manning

I love you uncle Stephon (could you draw me a picture for my birthday?)

I just loved that letter from her, it made me feel good. I did just as she requested, drawn her a birthday card, bought her a birthday card sent them both at the same time. But this is this the thing you youngsters must understand... when you give a person your word that you're going to do something, do it! Because you break hearts when you break your word. And for all of you young men in general. One day you'll find out that your word is all you have to give — don't break it. It'll show in your eyes! Trust me, I know the signs very clearly. Be true to your word and to your family and your friends!

RAY SANCHEZ JR. We're glad this next Beat superstar is 'Happy Inside' because that means we're happy inside. This week he hits us with three amazing poems (has he ever written anything that wasn't amazing?) and we can't seem to put this section down because of it. In his first, 'Happy Inside,' he explains what makes him happy while being in a place that can make you so sad. And in his second, 'Nation Of Losers,' he explains how people constantly try to glorify the life he's lead without living it themselves. He closes with a poem to his wife that's very heartfelt. He's writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA. We're constantly complimenting him for good reason. You'll see...

Happy Inside

It's been a minute since I've written
But I'm back wit' a vengeance
Still stuck in prison
But I'm feeling stupendous
Had to change the way I 'm livin'
Gave up freedom 'cause my sinnin'
Had me losin' quite often
Buyin' coffins wit' my winnin's
Buried a few.
I choose to do more than you
Who stay stuck packin' crack
On a track wit' a tool
I've seen rats snitch on one another
I seen brothers betray
Same motive moving them:
They wanna get paid
Financially secure her
And you bound to get laid
But she spread her legs
'Cause she believes it's the way
Obsessin' over affection
gained through unprotected sexin'
used to be unpopular
Now her is craving attention
And what about ol' boy?
He slit his wrist 'cause his chick
Simply wasn't satisfied, she cheated a bit
All kids pissed, twisted
The reason is this:
If you ain't happy inside,
You'll never find external bliss
Wealth don't bring goodness
But goodness, it brings wealth
And every other blessing
All you need is some help
And fame?
To gain fame you gotta appease other men
And you lose a piece of yourself
When you force yourself to fit in
Stressin' ova possesin' possessions
That posses you
Gold grills, 'dallions. ice and tennis shoes
If that's all you is
Then homie what you gonna do.

I've seen rats snitch

on one another

I seen brothers betray

Same motive moving them:

They wanna get paid

Nation Of Losers

I find inspiration in a nation of losers
Tattooed murderers and amphetamine abusers
I refuse to fuse fiction to the image that's stickin'
I ain't pickin' the highlights, listen,
I'm tryna be of assistance
There was a large Fam – Bam , a clan of local thugs
Deep into thievery, gang bangin', and drugs
Out of two sisters, one pissed away her life
Lost custody of her kids,
When she gained custody of a pipe
The youngest brother, one of seven,
Slams dope in the night.
But another fully functions,
'Till he's locked up fo' life
The one named 'Beto loved heavy metal like a rocker
He sits on deathrow ,
For out cappin' ' a rookie copper
The story goes on, much in the same fashion
'Cause all of them had kids
who couldn't wait to be smashin' '
to be like thei' daddy, cousins , uncles and aunties
how do I know? homie , this is my family
I did my first drive by wit' uncles around me
It was nothing like movies or t.v
That garbage astounds me!
I can't believe you's hypnotized by the lies that you 're told
I've physically lived it, it's left me feeling cold
How many rappers it take to make a video
How many've died so they could glorify
What's left my family life broke
I find inspiration in this nation of losers
Losers who've inspired me to duck police cruisers.

So You Could Borrow (Part 1)

If they took me away today
Would you think of me tomorrow?
'Cause everything I've gained I gained so you could borrow,
From my experiences, experience more than sorrow
Sorrow's a sad seed that grows pain by the barrel
Or would you crack a sneer and forget why I was here?
Forget the positive but remember all of my fears
I remember the day
I turned my back on my wife
It was the same damn day that she said that she held life
And my first response was to ask whose it was
'Cause I knew I used protection e'ry time we made love
You should of seen the hurt in her eyes
Not from my reaction, but from the second surprise
Holes poked in condoms
Truth becomes lies
She felt it was the only way to keep me
From leaving in the night
Shocked, pissed and sick, felt like slicing my wrists
But ore to the point
I wish she didn't exist
I did her bad
Kicked her out and downward spiraled
True times and jail time, gang bangin' for miles
Crashed and burned first before I hit the hearse
Did so much dope I thought my heart would burst
She was there through it all, stood by my side
Fought for my love and was always down to ride
Whether it was guilt that compelled her
Or love in the beginning
It was her hand on the reigns that kept my life from finishing
And now, she's still here and my daughter's my joy
I can't even think why I ever wanted a boy
Now it is I who feel guilty for being an ass
For my utter disrespect
And for treating her bad
For constantly pushing her to abort my baby
This is an apology directed to my lady
Find in your heart to forgive your man
And please keep in mind, I'm doing all I can
I give all that I am
Because you're my everything
And feel blessed everyday

Consequence Awareness

What's pushin' with y'all? Off top, let me strike one love off to all those worthy and up on game enough to comprehend these words that I express and to those enduring that same struggle, but pushin' forward despite the obstacles of concrete walls and barbed wire that separate us from the calles. Before I let loose on my thoughts, I'm fin' to put a lil' SF rating on this piece for all them suckas out here in it for the fame and fun, frontin' off—fake motives and fake intentions, and unaware of the consequences that acquaint with the pleasures. You see, most folks are young-minded and blind to the fact of what they get themselves into, until the shhh hits the fan, and then they get spooked and flip the script. What most don't realize is it's all or nothin'! Basically you're married to the game once you take on the responsibility of upholding that name. There's no half-steppin'—it's for life! That's why we end up seeing some of our so-called carnales speak the unspoken for a deal, and fools hitting the pen with 25-to-life--nothing to lose and yet they quit banging, 'cause it's too deep for their young hearts to handle.

Be aware of what you're getting yourself into beforehand, yadada I mean? It's a one-way ticket and if you can't accept it, then this life just ain't for you, so get up out and never look back, homes. I've witnessed too many vatos take a fall, 'cause their shadow grew too heavy.

The situations we endure in life are all for a reason. We all have a purpose and even though my familia fear the reality of mines, I invite it and accept that mines is to strive through this struggle and uphold my vatos' points of view. This ain't to glorify thangs I do, it's just to keep it real as a warning for what this vida brings. If you ain't feeling the Kool-Aid, then get up out the mix, you feel me? There's other things to life than these four walls of sorrow and tears. I love what I do and in serving these years with a smile, nothing could possibly bring yo' boy down, based on my loyalty is too strong. That's that loyalty unpenetratable, like a bulletproof vest.

Most shhh that I read in The Beat, I see folks express their stress toward group homes or juvenile hall, and their fear of hittin' the Y. And if that's the case, then, Lord knows how the every day mind games will affect them in the Y or the pen. There's pieces I've come across where vatos find themselves crying over bullshhh ass six-month sentences. If that affects you, then strengthen yourself and push for somethin' positive. Just don't involve yourself in a negative subculture and expect positive outcomes, 'cause you'll find yourself disappointed. That's all I got for you right now, so much love and respect. Shout off to all the homies surviving time in Preston, O.H. Close, De Witt, and Chad. CYA ain't nothin', homies. Shake them haters. Striking out. Al ratos.

LIL' NATE

Now in the California Youth Authority in Preston in Lone, California, has submitted two essays full of wisdom he's already gleaned from his young life in the streets. He warns any youth thinking about joining a gang, how serious and full time that life will be. Then he describes how a his homie was gunned down in the streets, as a warning to you all that your young ones and you need protecting, even from the gang life.

Rest In Peace

Damn, it was beautiful that night. Nothing but clear skies with stars shining down on me and my homies. It was, like, 9:00 pm Friday night when we got there. We had just copped a half and a couple bottles of some Cuervo, along with a few tall cans of some Miceys. At that time I wasn't even interested in females. I mean, your boy hadn't even hit puberty yet, but there were two hynas there for my boy J, RIP, and my boy, Spider, RIP.

I know y'all out here who been in the game since an early age had them older homies who looked out for you, showed love, and taught you the ropes before you could even comprehend the severity of the game. So that's what those vatos were to me. They were the two influences that first put my paño into my hands.

But, yeah, we were at an alleyway downtown close to Tracy. But, yeah, we were just right there--posted, lovin' it, drinkin', smokin', and chillin'. Around 11:00 one of my boys pushed off to go mess with some lil' freak and I could hear her from all the way on the other side of the alleyway. Me and the homie, Spider, RIP, were at the front when we saw a car pass by on a creep-type profile, and a minute later they drove by again and exchanged a few words out the window to my older homie. Gang signs were thrown and the last thing I heard was my homie say was his varrio. Then slugs started flying and homeboy jumped back, but I saw his body stumble to the ground. I wish I would have had a pistol, but I guess I was too young to slang death wishes, you feel me? Damn, homie, all I could do was stand idle like a statue. Finally, when their car started out, I seen my homeboy who had been messing with that hyna run out with his pistol, but it was too late. The two females had done took off screaming and my boy picked Spider RIP off the ground and they pushed to their car. As they were getting in, I made a movement to hop in the car, but my older homie said, "Chale" and to hurry up and smash off home before the one-time come.

After that night, it must have been a few years later 'til my boy J RIP told me that Spider RIP passed away in that car on the way to the hospital. I I guess he thought I was too young to handle some shhh like that. I loved both those vatos right there. If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be who I am now.

Later on down the road, in 2004, J RIP lost his life. So let this be a dedication to him, too, for his memory. Rest in peace to them and all the other fallen soldiers in the game. You never know when your time gon' come, so live for today and don't depend on tomorrow, 'cause it ain't promised. Al ratos. Strikin' out.

DAVID CAIN

We really think people can gain insight from the following, "I'm now 28 and I have figured out that even though you change your surroundings you will still do the same shhh that got you locked up in the beginning. You have to change yourself!" We believe that line is true... That we can change everything around us if we want to, but unless we work on ourselves it doesn't matter where we are or how many chances we've gotten, we are still going to end up in predicaments we don't want to be in. He's writing from the Washington State Penitentiary in Walla Walla, Washington.

Dear Beat Within

Read Mr. Collins poem "Wake Up Call." It's sad to see that these brutalities go on else where in the good ol' USA. I am in a IMU, SHU, super max, whatever you call it, it's the same. Everything Mr. Collins said goes on here too. How can the mentally ill be gassed when they don't understand what they do is wrong?

Kids please listen to me, freedom is the most beautiful

thing there is. Embrace it, love it. There will be good times and bad times but in prison there is no good times!

I started doing time in the system at 17 in Kansas. I moved to Washington State to get away from old friends to start over. I'm now 28 and I have figured out that even though you change your surroundings you will still do the same shhh that got you locked up in the beginning. You have to change yourself! Eleven years later I figured it out, too late though. I'm now serving 21 years for the state of WA and when I'm done I go see Uncle Sam for another 10 years. I'll be almost 60 when I get released.

Listen to them old people kids, they didn't get old by being dumb. Just remember when you are out doing stupid shhh that once you're caught it's too late then. I'm sorry, I learned my lesson, don't work. Please finish school, get your G.E.D. learn a trade. But please learn your lesson before it's too late. There's no turning back time. There is no glory being in prison.

LIKEWISE Introduced to us by our beloved Frank Ramos, we give you this first time writer who really has a whole lot to say. He starts off with a story about why he is where he is — in a California State Prison in San Diego, CA. And from his story we can tell there's still a little sense of glorification of his old lifestyle, but we can tolerate it because in the end he has a real good message. He's speaking to the younger generation, which he deems our future. And as he does so you can tell he wishes he could've went back in time to talk to the younger him. He carries that same passion in his letter to the rest of the 'youngins.' Then he concludes with a poem about it being his first time locked up and what he had to suffer through. Be on the lookout for him because we can tell he's going to be a powerful force in our pages...

The Beat Within

First off peaceful greetings to your whole entire staff from top to bottom, I'm truly feeling the movement y'all pushing up there in the Bay Area! It's a beautiful cause that your editors and writers are striving for and I want to try an' contribute to that positive energy an' add on. Whoever's initial idea it was to produce a publication for our troubled youth to be able to explain and express their minds hearts is a god send blessing.

I'm interested in getting a subscription to your weekly volumes as well as becoming another writer/poet among your pages. This forum I feel is a great outlet for release not only for the youngins in the system but adults in prison also. I am currently serving time in the pen down in San Diego. I was just sentenced in October to an upper term of thirteen years and four months with 85% (you can do the math... I'm good with words not numbers) for being at the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong people and an innocent human being lost their physical life!

And in the process their families was destroyed emotionally and lost part of their structure. It's crazy what the fractions of a milla-second can change! But I'm learning to live with regret I'm still young... I'll be 24 in December on the 26th lord willing when I reach my parole date I'll be in my prime age of life! I've only done a year and change in the county jail so far... and got a long way to go in the state prison system and if God's will permits a continued journey in the so called "free world" I got a decade plus to get through behind those concrete walls and razor topped electric fences. I just try and maintain an' not complain (out loud, lol) and continually remind myself that no condition is permanent. I must endure and remain diligent... but enough about "I" it's all about the youth, man I've read tons of poetry and abstract literature in my time on the outs and inside my cell and truth be told I consider half of it garbage and the other half satisfactory in comparison to what I read in The Beat Within.

So far I've read just about everything in volumes 11.36 and 11.41 and I was blown away to the point where I was like damn I need to practice my art form — perfect my craft! These youngsters got mad talent, I would hate to see it go to waste, in my honest opinion it seems like each generation get better at being worse! And I was touched by a lot of their pieces, their pain and agony is truly heart felt because I can share the sadness they are going through and I enjoy their triumph as well because they are the future of this nation... not only that but my future to pray for and look forward to having them hopefully in a position when I get free to hire me or help me out in some type of way and understand where I'm coming from and fought through a similar experience with this system.

I ain't gonna front I haven't seen it all but I've seen enough. In this life we all must suffer and struggle to some degree with whatever obstacles along our path but no condition is permanent every single life has 180o spin to it for better or worse! As for me myself I was cursed with a hidden blessing I was never a member of a gang but all my peers chose that lifestyle but I couldn't follow that route. Growing up in my early teens I was just a thrill seeker doing risky things others my age didn't have the brave hearted super thug (facade) for, so I was a lone souljah, do my dirt by my lonely, stick up kid, neighborhood crook! Pulling licks, smoking weed, and getting drunk but not in that order it was most likely get drunk, break in somebody's apartment or car then get blunted.

Well as time moved on so did I and the crimes advanced

to selling weed and coke in small amounts — nothing major. I never thought I was taking penitentiary chances back then and thought I couldn't be caught because I was doing these things solo under the radar. My family had not fully ever suspected me and my illegal life adventure. So as them years continued to progress so did I... started to abuse drugs a lot more! Sniffing cocaine, holdin' heat but preferred knives at the time and now with me it's my younger brother by a couple years so me and him started gettin' it how we lived. Came to the point where we was about 18-19 untouchable, never been more than hand cuffed on the back of a squad car at the time, arraigned then my brother had become a straight savage with a raw mentality very merciless in his actions.

Ss for me I was borderline and could flip just as easily but had more self-control so to speak. I was more logical and thought everything out. As for my brother he would almost always react off instinct so we was the perfect pair. So we thought and developed into jackin' small time weed slangers and two bit hustlers and part time pimps and prostitutes was getting robbed too! At that time just about anybody would get it. Back then I was not workin' and got a solid connection on some chronic and she... yeah a female in her early 30's wanted to have me on her side moving good size amounts of weed (mainly she knew the deal about me pulling jack moves) and didn't want to become one.

Around this time my brother was locked up in county jail for some spur of the moment shhh he did so I was not tryin' to have his hot-headed stubborn self with me. So I met her (my female connect) she had freezers full of bud at all times! She was supplying me with my own personal weed to sell or smoke if I chose and with more to make money for her with, I never once thought about stickin' her for her supply. Why not? Well because she had two babies to support and a big ass boyfriend. But the main reason I didn't jack her was because she kept them heaters close, twin rubber grip, plastic glocks I think they was baby nines with infrareds and all no joke! I had access to guns too but not like that plus if I would have robbed her that would have been bad for business ya' know what I'm sayin'!?

Well eventually things got hot with I time becoming away plus she started messing with a new product, crystal meth she ended up shakin' the spot and our ties were severed. During all this time my brother is going in and out of jail starting to develop that pattern as for me I was a ghost to the system. I felt like I couldn't be caught as long as it was always me committing crimes by myself. I was over worked. My rep was built out of gold from peers to the older cats on the block... but I was only known as either the weed man or a cat burglar, to the point where I had to ponder is this all I am capable of what the hell have I become. People didn't really know of the more serious drugs I was using, they thought weed was my drug of choice but I stopped smoking it unless there was coke sprinkled on it. I had become something I used to turn others into... a fiend.

One day I was throwing a little drug insisted kick back. I was smoked out-snorted out and tripping on mushrooms and my brother was present dazed and under the influence of it all and I'm pretty messed up too! But I start to observe the whole scene and somehow my mortality starts to surface telling me this ain't how one is supposed to be living and I'm looking at my bruh like what have we become? What am I doing to my own blood brother? Thoughts in my head arose getting the best of me... telling me I wasn't supposed to turn out this way and that this façade isn't who I genuinely am inside. I was like is my consciences messing with me or is it just these drugs mainly mushrooms taken effect... I didn't know what it was that was telling me my life was way off balance. But I started trying to do right and karma caught up with me just as I was doing pretty good. For three to five years livin' a legit life...

Now I'm in here in prison inside the 6x10 cell facing 11 plus years! It's the gift and the curse. I say that because the moral of story is that while I was young runnin' wild and living dangerous I never got caught up for anything I did. I feel that if I would've, I wouldn't be in this situation now. So I say to all you youngins in group homes, juvenile hall, Y.A. camps and cottages or wherever it's a blessing and a curse hopefully you gains some insight from being locked up and

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punished and when you get out and move on in life and do things the right way, totally legit... forget the fast life man! Because young kings and queens soon enough it catches up to you some way, somehow. It's a small world watch what you do. I'm just here to try and drop some knowledge on the youth but it's up to them to pick it up! You know each one teach one, I offer information, advice and opinions, everything starts in the mind with ideas. Anything you see, smell, taste, hear, and touch with the senses it's the products of ones imagination, everything in this world was born out of a mind! Whether it be a car, song, prison, sneaker. So I just want to encourage the youngins to strengthen their mental and exercise their brains because they are just as capable if not more to develop there dreams into a reality.

I've been explaining and expressing myself to piece of paper since I was thirteen years old starting with short stories and creative writing then penning poems and rhymes and just literature on so many different formats. It's always been like therapy for me I could be really heated

LIKEWISE (CONT.)

about something put it on paper and take the energy out of that negative vibe and flip it into a positive one. Well this is me and it was nice to introduce myself to y'all but... I almost forgot to mention last but not least the man who put me up on The Beat Within. My top tier neighbor, "kon artist" aka Frank Ramos! Dude got's some hot spit but with depth to it we got the Latin connection going strong. Me being Panamanian and him Puerto Rican but I am a dark skinned ninja and proud! I hope I didn't write too much with my run on sentences, you don't have to print it all only what's important and effective... but I'm gonna leave y'all with another page featuring my poetry/rap under my emcee/poet alias "likewise" so if ya' feelin' it I would appreciate it dearly if you printed it but not for my sake so until next rhyme... much love, peace, and respect take care and god bless.

First Time In

This can't be my destiny
To do time in the penitentiary
Probably a quarter century
For a crime and it wasn't even my weaponry.
Got officers arrestin' me
Detectives tryna question me
Haven't reached the period where they sentence me
But allegedly I was an accessory to a murder conspiracy.
They're gonna try an give me nine years at least
Seen my sister and started cryin' during visiting
For the first time my tears released,
Witness my journey
Walked into the courtroom
Feel the tension from the district attorney
If it was there decision their only wish is to burn me.
The judge throws the book at me to add to the fire
But this could create a cold case because I've never had

any priors.
I have faith I won't lose this case
Because I'm a soul survivor
Plus Gods on my side as my divine advisor
So I've decided to be righteous
Seek God's provided guidance
To stay open minded and focused with closed eyelids
Tryna find the silence in a place that is timeless
Where every race is divided in a place controlled by a cold climate
And you don't know the science
Behind it my tear drops froze while I'm cryin'
But I got a warm heart that's as bold as a lion's.
Plus I'm down to earth like birds when they're not flying.
To those who wanna keep my hopes down cease tryin'
Because I follow the most high and stay right behind him.
I'm like the suns shine none can stop me from risin'
Because I speak brilliance like my tongue was made from diamonds.

BRYANT T. COOPER Writing from the
Facility in Alamo, Georgia, we bring you a man who's poetry offers hope and breaks mental barriers. In his first, "Keep A Poem In Your Pocket," Bryant offers a way to console yourself if you're feeling lonely. Keep this poem when you're feeling lonely and maybe it'll bring peace of mind. Then he closes with a poem that repeats the first line in each stanza. "When I say I'm a Christian..." When he does this he gives the effect that he's really passionate about his religion, which for some is the line between living a positive or negative lifestyle. As long as it offers the former we don't see anything wrong with it. Please keep The Beat in your prayers.

I'm professing that I'm weak
And need His strength to carry on

Keep A Poem In Your Pocket

Keep a poem in your pocket
And a picture in your head
You'll never feel lonely
At night when you're in bed.

The little poem will sing to you
The little picture bring to you
A dozen dreams will dance with you
At night when you're in bed

So

Keep a picture in your pocket
And a poem in your head
You'll never feel lonely
At night when you're in bed

I Am A Christian

When I say, I am a Christian
I'm not shouting, I'm clean livin'
I'm whispering I was lost
Now I'm found and forgiven

When I say, I am a Christian
I don't speak of this with pride
I'm confessing that I stumble
And I need Christ to be my guide

When I say, I am a Christian
I'm not trying to be strong
I'm professing that I'm weak
And need His strength to carry on

When I say, I am a Christian
I'm not bragging of success
I'm admitting that I've failed
And need God to clean my mess

When I say, I am a Christian
I'm not claiming to be perfect
My flaws are too visible
But God believes I'm worth it...

When I say, I am a Christian
I still feel the sting of pain
I have my share of heartaches
So I call upon his name

When I say, I am a Christian
I'm not holier than thou
I'm just a simple sinner
Who received God grace somehow.

Tryna find the silence in a place that is timeless
Where every race is divided in a place controlled by a cold climate
And you don't know the science
Behind it my tear drops froze while I'm cryin'
But I got a warm heart that's as bold as a lion's.
Plus I'm down to earth like birds when they're not flying.
To those who wanna keep my hopes down cease tryin'
Because I follow the most high and stay right behind him.
I'm like the suns shine none can stop me from risin'
Because I speak brilliance like my tongue was made from diamonds.

check out the rest of Likewise's BWO piece on page 47

